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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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POTHOLE DEATHS ROSE BY 53% IN 5 YEARS

At least 9,438 were killed across the country between 2020 and 2024, the government informed the Parliament. Here's a look:

5,127 deaths in Uttar Pradesh (54%).

969 deaths in Madhya Pradesh.

612 deaths in Tamil Nadu.

414 deaths in Punjab.

States such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Goa reported no pot-hole related accidents or fatalities.

There were only, **23,056** pothole-related accidents in these **5 years.**

*Govt data

The return of Tarique; BNP sweeps Bangladesh polls

After 17 years in exile, Khaleda's son wins 209 of 297 seats

DHAKA, 13 FEB

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won more than two-thirds in the landmark parliamentary elections. BNP Chief Tarique Rahman, returning after a 17-year exile, is set to become the Prime Minister, replacing Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, who was the Chief of the interim government after the mass student-led uprising brought down the 15-year rule of the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

The BNP is returning to power after more than two decades.

The 13th Parliamentary elections come after a period of tumultuous political vacuum, instability and fragile security situation.

According to the unofficial results announced by the Election Commission (EC), the BNP bagged 209 out of 297 seats, while Right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami secured 68 seats. Hasina's Awami League was barred from contesting the polls, which recorded 59.44 per cent voter turnout.

BNP Chief Tarique Rahman after a landslide victory in the 13th Bangladesh Parliamentary elections on Friday—*FB/BNP*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Tarique, even before the results were officially announced, and congratulated him. The BNP thanked Modi and said it hoped that the relations between the two countries would be strengthened.

Relations had soured after Hasina fled to New Delhi following her ouster. Bangladesh demanded her extradition while India flagged an alleged increased targeting of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh.

Tarique has vowed to expand financial aid for poor families, offering "family cards" and reduce reliance on garment exports by promoting industries such as toys and leather goods. The BNP was founded by Tarique's father Ziaur Rahman.

His mother, Khaleda Zia served as the prime minister twice. While the BNP under Khaleda has been accused of harsh crackdowns, analysts hope that Tarique will be more subdued. —*PTI*

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"I convey my warm congratulations to Tarique Rahman... India will continue to stand in support of a democratic, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh.

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

An overturned truck after a series of collisions involving a motorcycle and cars on the Hoskote-Dabaspet National Highway, in Bengaluru district, on Friday —*PTI*

7 killed in vehicle pile-up near Hoskote

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Seven people were killed in a multi-vehicle pile-up on the outskirts of Hoskote near Bengaluru in Bengaluru Rural district early on Friday, police said.

The accident occurred near M Satyavara village on the Hoskote–Dabaspete NH when an SUV coming from Hoskote towards Devanahalli struck a motorcycle from behind.

The SUV driver lost control after the initial impact and crashed into a canter.

Another car was also drawn into the wreckage, resulting in a pile-up.

Six occupants of the SUV car and the motorcycle rider died on the spot, police said.

The deceased are suspected to be residents of Kothanur in Bengaluru, although their identities have not been confirmed.

The bodies have been shifted to the Hoskote Government Hospital for autopsy. A case has been registered and investigation is on. —*Agencies*

Reliance gets licence to buy Venezuelan oil

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd has received a US general licence to purchase Venezuelan crude oil directly, allowing India's largest private refiner to resume imports of discounted heavy crude that suits its Jamnagar refinery. Previously, Reliance had bought Venezuelan oil via traders due to US sanctions. The licence enables direct purchases from Venezuelan producers, improving feedstock costs, refining margins, and petrochemical yields. The move comes shortly after the US and India agreed to an interim-trade deal. —*PTI*

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UNSC links JeM to Red Fort attack

UNITED NATIONS, 13 FEB

A report by the UN Security Council sanctions monitoring team has noted that Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed was reported to be linked to a terror attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi.

The blast that occurred in November, 2025 killed 15 people.

The 37th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted to the Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee concerning ISIL and Al-Qaida said that on 8 October JeM leader Mohammed Masood Azhar Alvi "formally announced the establishment of a women-only wing, Jamaat ul-Muminat, aimed at supporting terrorist attacks.

Even as another member state said that Jaish-e-Mohammed was defunct, the report added that "It was reported that on 28 July, three individuals allegedly involved in the attack perpetrated in Pahalgam, in Jammu and Kashmir, were killed."

The blast near New Delhi Red Fort killed at least 15 people in November 2025. After the blast, India busted a 'white-collar' terror module —*PTI*

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that the UNSC report took notice of India's inputs on cross-border terrorism.

The UNSC report further said that Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent remained active in south-eastern Afghanistan, where the Haqqani Network exerts considerable influence. ISIL-K was active mainly in northern Afghanistan and areas close to the Pakistani border. —*PTI*

WINS 1,526 WARDS

Cong sweeps T'gana municipal polls

HYDERABAD, 13 FEB

The ruling Congress secured 1,526 wards in the Telangana Municipal elections, counting for which progressed on Friday. While the Opposition BRS bagged 772, the BJP trailed with 326 wards, as per early trends.

Of the 2,958 wards declared, AIFB (All India Forward Block), bagged 66 and the CPI(M) 13.

Twelve people were elected unanimously, official sources said.

The counting of votes began at 123 centres across the state at 8 am.

The election was held on 11 February for 2,582 wards in 116 municipalities and 414 wards in seven municipal corporations.

The outcome of the three-cornered contest between the ruling Congress and the opposition BJP and BRS is crucial for all of them as it would be an indicator of their popularity among the voters.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy hailed the "resounding win" as BRS said that it got the most votes in municipalities. —*PTI*

GOVT NOT MOVING MOTION AGAINST RAHUL: RIJIJU

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said that the government has shelved a plan to bring a motion against Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for using unparliamentary language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a BJP MP has submitted a notice to initiate a "substantive motion" against the Congress leader.

Gandhi had alleged that Modi was compromised because of his affiliation to convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein and had sold the country to foreign powers.

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi on Friday, Rijiju said that the Speaker would be consulted on whether to send the matter to the House privilege committee, the ethics committee, or bring it directly to the Lok Sabha. "It has not yet been decided," he said.

He noted that since a private member has already submitted a notice for the motion, the government will refrain from introducing its own motion.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said on Thursday that he has given a notice to initiate a "substantive motion" against Gandhi, demanding the cancellation of his Lok Sabha membership and calling for him to be barred from contesting elections for life. —*PTI*

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5 Delhi schools get 'Khalistan' bomb scare

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

At least five schools in Delhi received bomb threat emails on Friday morning, which were later declared a hoax, officials said. "Delhi will become Khalistan," the threat note stated. The emails warned of explosions in schools at 1.11pm and Parliament at 2.11pm. Targeted schools included Delhi Tamil Education Association, Kendriya Vidyalaya (Gole Market), Happy Public School, Rabea Public School, and CL Bhalla DAV School. All students were safely evacuated, and thorough searches found nothing suspicious. This is the second bomb threat with a Khalistan message in less than a week. There have been at least 50 bomb threats to schools, courts, and public places in a week. —*PTI*

TVK workers assault scribes in Salem

SALEM, 13 FEB

Television journalists were roughed up by some TVK members near a hospital where a man who attended party chief Vijay's meeting died earlier on Friday, police said.

The journalists, waiting at the hospital, sought a senior functionary of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam the reason for the death of Suraj, from Maharashtra, and also asked if the latter was provided with an entry pass containing the QR code.

However, some TVK members who accompanied the district functionary asked the TV crew not to take any visuals and roughed them up. This led to the argument.

Suraj, who fainted at the rally venue before Vijay had arrived, was rushed to a hospital and was declared brought dead by doctors, police said. — *PTI*

Stalin 'gifts' 1.31 cr women Rs 5K each

CHENNAI, 13 FEB

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Friday that the state government has given Rs 5,000 each to 1.31 crore women beneficiaries of the government's women entitlement scheme.

He also announced to double the monthly grant to Rs 2,000 if his DMK was voted to power in the Assembly election.

Noting that Rs 5,000 has been directly deposited into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries of Kalaignar Women's Entitlement scheme, he said, "You would have received Rs 5,000 this morning. I have decided to provide it in view of an attempt (by vested interests) to freeze the scheme citing elections."

MK Stalin —*PTI*

So, in order to counter the move to prevent the women from receiving the monthly financial assistance due for them, I decided to provide the sum for three months from February and in addition provide Rs 2,000 to meet their expenses during summer, he said in a video message posted on his X.

"Further, the monthly entitlement of Rs 1,000 will be increased to Rs 2,000 once the DMK returns to power this year," Stalin said in the message. — *PTI*

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IN FY25

BJP got 82% of Rs 3,826 crore disbursed by electoral trusts: ADR

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Electoral trusts received Rs 3,826.34 crore in contributions in 2024-25 and disbursed Rs 3,826.35 crore to political parties, with the BJP receiving over 82 per cent of the funds, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said.

In its latest report submitted to the Election Commission (EC), the NGO said 10 of the 20 registered electoral trusts declared receiving donations during FY25.

A total of Rs 3,826.3417 crore was received from corporations and individuals during the financial year and Rs 3,826.3522 crore distributed to various political parties.

The BJP received Rs 3,157.6549 crore, the Indian National Congress received Rs 298.7795 crore and the All India Trinamool Congress got Rs 102 crore (2.67 per cent). Nineteen other parties together received Rs 267.9178 crore.

228 corporate or business houses contributed Rs 3,636.819 crore, while 99 individuals donated Rs 187.6227 crore. Maharashtra was the largest source of contributions at Rs 1,225.4293 crore, followed by Telangana (Rs 358.25 crore). —*PTI*

TCS shares crash as AI fears drag IT index

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

IT giant Tata Consultancy Services saw its shares tumble on Friday, as investors reacted to mounting fears that artificial intelligence could upend the traditional outsourcing model that has long powered the sector.

TCS shares tumbled 5.41 per cent on Friday, dragging its market capitalisation below the Rs 10 lakh crore mark for the first time in five years. However, value buying was seen in the stocks with the Nifty IT index rising over 4 percentage points from day's low.

Friday the 13th turned into a horror show for other IT majors too such as Infosys, Wipro, and Salesforce. Analysts say the trigger was growing anxiety over advances by AI firm Anthropic.

The AI push, driven by the integration of "adaptive thinking" models such as Anthropic's Claude Cowork into WisdomNext, is being perceived as a move toward large-scale human replacement. TCS's WisdomNext, announced in January, is a platform that aggregates multiple generative AI and services.

However, Anthropic's latest systems can handle complex professional tasks — from contract reviews to data analysis. Investors fear this could reduce demand for outsourced services.

Some analysts say the sell-off may be an overreaction even as Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei predicts AI could displace 50 per cent of white-collar jobs by 2030. —*Salar News*

Girl's loses fingers in school, teachers throw them away

TUMAKURU, 13 FEB

A Class 1 student lost two fingers in an accident at a government school in Gooluru village of Tumakuru taluk on February 9. Chinmayi Devi's fingers were severed when another student allegedly slammed a classroom door on her hand. Teachers reportedly bandaged her hand but threw away the severed fingers. Doctors later said they could have been reattached if preserved. Her parents alleged negligence and delay in informing them. Police have registered a case against the BEO, headmaster and staff under BNS and JJ Act provisions.—*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

II PUC students to get free ride to exam hall

MANGALURU, 13 FEB

The KRSA Corporation has allowed second year PUC students appearing for their examination to travel free in the Corporation's city, suburban, regular and express buses on the dates of the second PUC examination, that is, from 28.02.2026 to 17.03.2026. The students must show their 'Second PUC Examination Admit Card' while going from their place of residence to the designated examination centre and while returning. As the examination centres are in distant educational institutions, the Chairman of the Karnataka School Examinations and Evaluation Board had requested the KRSA Corporation allow PUC students in the state to travel for free to the examination centres.— Salar News

3 held for MDMA possession in coastal Karnataka

MANGALURU, 13 FEB

Three people were arrested for alleged MDMA possession with intent to sell in the coastal city of Ullal, Dakshina Kanada, police said on Friday. The Ullal residents— Mustafa Seediyabba, 34, Maiyaddi, 28, and Mohammed Shifan, 28— have been taken into custody. The City Crime Branch intercepted the suspects' car near Talapady on Thursday and seized 118.13 grams of MDMA worth Rs 11.9 lakh, along with four mobile phones and the car, bringing the total value to Rs 17.95 lakh. Police said the banned drugs were procured from Bengaluru and were being supplied to students and the general public within the Ullal city limits. An investigation is underway to identify others involved in the suspected supply network. —*PTI*

Sale of meat prohibited on Mahashivratri: GBA

BENGALURU, 12 FEB

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) issued a notification on Thursday prohibiting animal slaughter and meat sales in Bengaluru for Mahashivaratri. The one-day ban will be strictly enforced on the day of celebration -- Sunday, 15 February.The directive extends to online delivery platforms, with GBA officials warning of penalties for any violations. Authorities are ensuring that meat is neither served nor delivered within city limits, requiring hotels and delivery apps to comply strictly. Mahashivaratri is a sacred Hindu festival commemorating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Devotees observe the day through fasting and night-long prayers, celebrating the union of consciousness and energy and the triumph of light over ignorance. —*ANI*

Dalai Lama ends stay in State, goes to Dharamshala

DHARAMSHALA, 13 FEB

Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama returned to Himachal Pradesh's Dharamshala on Friday after a one-and-a-half-month sojourn in south India. He primarily spent his time at the Drepung Monastery, located in the Tibetan settlement of Mundgod in Karnataka. His 47-day visit, which commenced on 12 December and concluded on 9 February, was marked by a series of significant religious engagements. The spiritual leader arrived at the Gaggal Airport. This is the first time the Dalai Lama is returning to Dharamshala following his recent international recognition at the Grammy Awards. With his return, spiritual teachings and public engagements are expected to resume shortly. His next public appearance is scheduled for 23 February, when the Dalai Lama will attend a prayer ceremony offered by former Tibetan political prisoners from around the world and the Lhasa Boys Association Switzerland. —*PTI*

Safety of dams is a shared national obligation, says CM

He said nearly 75% of India's dams are over 25 years old

NEW DELHI, 31 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday stressed the need for an urgent, systematic safety evaluation, modernisation and risk-informed operation of dams, noting that nearly 70 per cent of them are over 25 years old.

Speaking after inaugurating the two-day international conference on Dam Safety–2026 at the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru, he said: "Water does not recognise political boundaries, nor should safety standards."

"We face climate-driven hydrological extremes. Seismic vulnerabilities, reservoir sedimentation and the stresses of ageing infrastructure create complex risks. Dam safety is no longer a technical afterthought; it is a national security imperative," he said.

India has 6,628 specified dams, making it the third-largest dam-owning nation in the world. Karnataka, with 231, ranks sixth in the country, he said.

He suggested that Union and State governments move beyond compliance to build a comprehensive safety culture. He highlighted the need for technical agencies to institutionalise risk-informed decision-making, academic institutions to broaden the scope of research to anticipate risk from climate variability, modernising financial mechanisms and empowering local administrations and communities.

Union Minister Raj Bhushan Choudhury, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, DCM DK Shivakumar and World Bank president Johannes Zutt and Japanese professor Toshio Koike in Bengaluru on Friday –*MOHAMMED ASAD*

WAITING FOR CENTRE ON MEKEDATU: DKS

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar also highlighted the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Programme (DRIP), launched in 2012 by the Centre with World Bank's assistance, as a strong example of Centre–State partnership.

"Karnataka is implementing DRIP Phase II and Phase III, covering 58 dams with an approved outlay of Rs 1,500 crore," he said.

Shivakumar said the State was pursuing statutory clearances on the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and Drinking Water Project. The project aims to meet drinking water needs of Bengaluru and generates around 400 MW of power. Under the Upper Krishna Project–Stage III, the government created irrigation potential for over 1.72 lakh acres till December, 2025—*PTI*

TN MP ASKS CENTRE TO ADDRESS PONNAIYAR WATER ISSUE

CHENNAI, 13 FEB

DMK Rajya Sabha member Rajathi on Friday raised concerns over the declining water supply to the Ponnaiyar river in the Rajya Sabha and urged the government for immediate intervention

He said that the declining water supply to the river is aggravating the distress of the agrarian community in the region.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Rajathi drew attention to a proposal to augment water supply to Ponnaiyar through a pumping system from the Cauvery River.

"If implemented, this plan will benefit farmers across hundreds of villages and restore water supply to the region," the MP said.

He said that water flow in the river decreased significantly due to recurring floods, impacting 2,834 acres of fertile agricultural land and depleting groundwater levels. —*PTI*

CALLED IT NATURAL DEATH

Woman kills mother over astrologer's black magic claim

TUMAKURU, 13 FEB

A 33-year-old woman allegedly smothered her mother with a pillow while she was asleep and attempted to pass it off as a natural death after being influenced by an astrologer's claims.

The incident occurred on Wednesday night in Anupanahalli village of Tumakuru taluk, but came to light only on Thursday after villagers alerted the authorities,

The deceased has been identified as Pushpavathi, 55. The accused, Suchitra, 33, was residing with her husband in the Srinagar area of Tumakuru city.

According to police, Suchitra's father had died about one-and-a-half years ago due to health ailments. However, she had reportedly consulted an astrologer online, who allegedly told her during a ritual reading that her mother had performed black magic, leading to her father's death.

During interrogation, Suchitra confessed to killing her mother after allegedly being influenced by the astrologer's claims.

She smothered her mother with a pillow while she was sleeping, a senior police officer said.

The crime was committed in the presence of her husband, who allegedly guided her.

The officer also suspect the motive to involve a financial dispute, which is being investigated.

The accused allegedly attempted to pass the death off as natural and tried to rush the funeral rites.

However, villagers grew suspicious over the condition of the body and the circumstances surrounding the death and alerted the authorities.

A case of murder has been registered. Both Suchitra and her husband have been arrested. —*PTI*

Cong MLC asks cops to book BJP MLA over forged letters

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Congress MLC Ramesh Babu has written to the Bengaluru Commissioner of Police, seeking to register a complaint against BJP MLA Sunil Kumar and MLC Ravikumar for allegedly creating and circulating a fake transfer letter which bore the name of the Chief Minister.

The letter claimed that a district health and family welfare officer in Mandya had been posted as deputy commissioner of excise in Mysuru.

In his letter to the police, Babu alleged that the BJP members shared the fake document on social media. The document allegedly was dated 2024. Babu said that Kumar and Ravikumar used the fake document to level false allegations of corruption against the Chief Minister.

"The circulated letter is completely forged and has been created with malicious intent," Babu wrote, noting that "the absence of an official date and reference number clearly establishes that it is a fabricated document."

He said the BJP members sought to mislead the public through false propaganda, which amounts to attempted character assassination.

He sought a case to be registered for forgery of government/public documents, defamation, criminal conspiracy, among other charges, under various sections of the BNS. He also urged the police to conduct a forensic investigation.

The Chief Minister Office (CMO) also urged police to register a case. Police later registered a case against an "unknown person". —*Salar News*

Enough is enough: Home Min slams buzz on leadership row

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

Expressing displeasure over the persistent speculation regarding the leadership issue in the State, **Home Minister G Parameshwara** on Friday urged his party colleagues to "stop it immediately".

He said that the ruling party's energy should be focused on governance and development rather than internal politics.

"Our AICC President (Mallikarjun Kharge) has gone to the extent of saying that everyone should keep their mouth shut. He cannot be more stricter... Despite this, leaders and legislators are commenting on it (leadership issue), which is not appropriate. This must stop," Parameshwara said. "Each one of us making different statements publicly on the topic will not be appropriate."

"I hope that the High Command is watching all of this. At the appropriate time, I will also speak to the High Command in this regard. Because, enough is enough, this must stop," he added.

The internal tensions flared up when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's son and MLC Yathindra insisting that the High Command had given a clear signal that his father would complete his full tenure, which supports of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar have consistently said their leader will become the CM.

Meanwhile, Shivakumar returned from New Delhi and repeated that he did not discuss the power tussle with the High Command. "Time will answer everything".

> **I always live with hope and confidence. There will always be fruit for the effort, whether it is for you, for me, or for anyone else. Where there is effort, there is fruit; where there is devotion, there is Gode**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition R Ashoka said the 1,000 day tenure of the Congress government has been 1,000 days of darkness, as people do not know who the Chief Minister is. —*PTI*

SIDDARAMAIAH WILL BE CM FOR 10 YEARS: MLA HARISH GOWDA

MYSURU, 13 FEB

Chamaraja MLA K Harish Gowda on Friday said that CM Siddaramaiah will do more than complete a full five-year term – he will be the CM for the next ten years.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, he said that that Siddaramaiah enjoys the support of all 136 Congress legislators. There is no power tussle, he added.

He added that "I have sought allocation of funds from the State government for construction of flyover, white topping of arterial roads of the city, for other development in the upcoming budget presentation by CM Siddaramaiah. " he said. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru techie referred to NIMHANS after 'killing' parents

BENGALURU, 13 FEB

The 33-year-old techie from Bengaluru, who allegedly killed his parents, has been referred to NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences) for psychiatric examination on Friday.

Police officials reported that the murder suspect Rohan Chandra Bhat suffers from psychiatric issues, with preliminary investigations suggesting he may have schizophrenia. However, a thorough and detailed medical examination is required to ascertain this.

Rohan is under investigation for allegedly stabbing his parents—Naveen Chandra Bhat, 60, a retired Navy captain, and

Dr Shyamala Bhat, 55—at their home on Wednesday.

Police said the accused gave inconsistent statements and showed mood swings. A preliminary assessment indicated he has psychiatric issues and was reportedly on medication.

Rohan returned to the City nearly two years ago after completing his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the US and working there for a time.

Since returning, Rohan had been freelancing for IT firms but intended to launch his own startup. According to DCP Saidulu Adavath, Rohan was living separately due to ongoing financial disputes with his parents.

On Tuesday night, following an argument over startup funding, Rohan allegedly attacked his parents at their residence with a knife. During the dispute, he reportedly stabbed both parents. —*PTI*

FARMERS MARCH IN CHAMARAJANAGAR

MYSURU, 13 FEB

Activists of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene staged a foot march in Chamarajanagar on Friday, pressing the government to fulfil various demands, including halting massive land acquisition projects and the continuation of the MGNREGA scheme.

The rally was organised as part of the 90th birth anniversary of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha founder Prof M D Nanjundaswamy. The march was led by Chukki Nanjundaswamy and Sandalwood actor and Raitha Sangha leader Ashok.

The procession began at the APMC gate near Gundlupet Circle and passed through Doddangadi Street, Chikkangadi Street, Santhemarahalli Circle, Deviation Road and Pacchappa Circle before culminating at the District Administration complex.

Addressing the gathering, Ashok criticised the State government's policies of acquiring fertile agricultural land in the name of development. He urged both the Centre and the State to take urgent measures to prevent farmer suicides, claiming that one farmer dies by suicide every minute in the country.

He also demanded implementation of the Prof M S Swaminathan Commission recommendations to ensure fair prices for agricultural produce, continuation of the MGNREGA scheme with Rs 600 daily wages, withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2025, opposition to smart meters for irrigation pumpsets, halting free trade agreements, operating KSRTC buses for government school students and repairing damaged roads. —*Salar News*

LEFT IN A POOL OF BLOOD

Class 1 student's fingers severed in govt school; teachers throw them away

TUMAKURU, 13 FEB

A Class 1 student in a Tumakuru government school lost two of her fingers in an accident during school but the teachers allegedly did not take her to a hospital and simply threw the severed limbs away. As a result, doctors were unable to reattach her fingers.

The incident occurred at around 1 pm on 9 February when Chinmayi Devi, a Class 1 student, was standing in line for the midday meals in the government school in Gooluru village of Tumakuru taluk. She placed her hand on the door of a nearby classroom but suddenly, another student forcefully closed the door. Two of Chinmayi's fingers on her right hand were caught in the door gap and severed.

Teachers then allegedly poured water on her hand and applied a bandage to stop the bleeding. Teachers said that they also then threw the fingers away because they were afraid that other children might panic if they saw the blood.

The parents, both daily wage labourers in a masonry, alleged institutional negligence, saying that they were informed about the incident very late. They said that they were informed about the incident at about 2.30pm.

"When we reached, we found her lying unconscious in a pool of blood. The teachers said she got her fingers severed in the iron door, but they didn't provide any first aid or medical help," Chinmayi's mother Ambika told Salar News. Renukamma, a teacher, transferred Rs 2,200 through UPI and told them to take Chinmayi to a good hospital.

When the parents took her to a nearby hospital, doctors said that the fingers could have been reattached if they were preserved.

> **When we reached, we found her lying unconscious in a pool of blood. The teachers said she got her fingers severed in the iron door, but they didn't provide any first aid or medical help**
>
> -Ambika, child's mother

"I reported this to our Gram Panchayat member, and he informed the Block Education Officer (BEO), Hanumanthappa," Ambika added. "But the BEO was casual and even made a casteist remark, saying 'Since your child belongs to an SC caste, you need not worry about it' and disconnected the call".

Police Sub Inspector (PSI) Bharti told Salar News that an FIR has been lodged at the Tumakuru Rural Police Station against Block Education Officer (BEO) Hanumanthappa, Headmaster Nagesh, teacher Renukamma, and (CRP) Venkatesh.

Police will also investigate if the door was intentionally closed to injure Chinmayi.

Based on a complaint filed by Ambika, a case has been registered at the Tumakuru Rural Police Station under section 125(a), 238 with 190 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and Section 75 of the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act). —*Salar News*

EC appoints spl observer for Bengal polls

KOLKATA, 13 FEB

The Election Commission on Friday appointed retired IPS officer NK Mishra as special observer for the ongoing SIR exercise and the upcoming West Bengal Assembly polls.In an official communication, the EC said Mishra was appointed "in exercise of the powers under Article 324 of the Constitution of India".He will oversee the ongoing revision of electoral rolls and monitor poll preparedness in the state, the statement added.

"As a Special Observer, you will oversee the process of Special Intensive Revision and observe poll preparedness and the conduct of the forthcoming general election to the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal, 2026," the Commission said in the letter. —PTI

—ANI

M'rashtra minister Zirwal denies hand in graft

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Maharashtra FDA Minister Narhari Zirwal on Friday said he would resign if any link is found to a departmental clerk arrested for allegedly accepting a Rs 35,000 bribe at Mantralaya. The clerk, Rajendra Dherange, reportedly demanded the bribe to restore a medical licence. Speaking in New Delhi, Zirwal said the accused would face consequences and denied any wrongdoing. The Congress criticised the BJP-led government, calling the arrest "shocking and shameful" and alleging a widespread culture of bribery in Mantralaya.

Leaders demanded the clerk's suspension and a probe into possible wider corruption. —PTI

Amit Thackeray demands Marathi tune on road

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena leader Amit Thackeray has criticised the choice of tune for India's first 'musical' road on Mumbai's Coastal Road, inaugurated by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde. Thackeray said the project should reflect Maharashtra's culture and suggested the road could have played the state song Garja Maharashtra Majha or a Lata Mangeshkar classic.

The 500-metre stretch uses specially designed grooves that produce the melody of Jai Ho from Slumdog Millionaire when vehicles travel at 70–80 km/h. Authorities plan to expand the musical road concept in future phases, blending innovation with driving experience. —PTI

Vijay: TVK's power sharing political bomb shook Stalin

Vijay assures people of a social justice driven regime in TN

SALEM/CHENNAI, 13 FEB

TVK Chief Vijay on Friday asserted that his offer to share power with allies has turned out to be a "political bomb" in Tamil Nadu and "rattled" DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin who has refused to do so with Congress.

Vijay's comments came at a rally at Seelanaickenpatti, here. Hitting back at those who mocked at him by alleging that he merely stayed back at home though claiming to have entered politics, he assured people a social justice driven regime if voted to power, .

Indicating that his entry into politics is shaking the established bipolar politics of the state, he said: "Do you remember my political bomb at the Vikravandi rally; offering to share power? It is now exploding recklessly in all the alliances. CM Stalin sir is rattled and he says that power sharing will not suit Tamil Nadu."

Mocking at what he described as non-starter alliance arithmetic and old-time calculations of rivals to win, he said none of it would work. Dreams to buy votes by giving money will not be fulfilled now that he has entered politics, he asserted.

"Wait, the election manifesto is getting ready; election manifesto will be unveiled. I will never disappoint you who believe in me. I will never make promises just for the sake of coming to power, I will never make promises that are not practically possible," he said.

In Chennai, BJP leader Tamilisai Soundararajan termed Stalin's announcement of Rs 5,000 aid for 1.31 crore women under the Kalaignar Women's Rights Scheme as driven by "election fear and fever." She charged that CM for 'unnecessarily' targeting the PM. "You should thank the PM for Digital India and Jan Dhan accounts. Because of these proactive measures, you are able to deposit it," she said. —PTI

TVK Chief Vijay during a party meeting held in Salem, Tamil Nadu, on Friday —PTI

Man faints during TVK rally and dies

At the TVK rally in Salema, a 37-year-old man fainted during Vijay's address and died on the way to hospital, police said. The man, identified as **Suraj**, was a native of Maharashtra. Earlier, in 2025, at least 41 people were killed and around 100 others were injured in a stampede during a political rally in Karur district by Vijay. It happened when a large sections of the crowd surged towards Vijay in an attempt to catch a glimpse of his convoy after his arrival was delayed by nearly seven hours. —PTI

Row erupts over illegal forms for WB 'unmapped voters'

KOLKATA, 13 FEB

A row has erupted in West Bengal ahead of the special intensive revision exercise's closure, following reports that unauthorised forms are being circulated to include "unmapped voters."

These unmapped voters had reportedly failed to submit required documents during the enumeration process.

Alleged distribution of such forms in parts of Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas has prompted the Election Commission to seek reports from district authorities, even as the chief electoral officer asserted that no such form was issued by the poll panel.

The hearing process under the SIR of electoral rolls will conclude on Saturday.

A few booth-level officers (BLOs) claimed that the unauthorised form requires so-called "unmapped voters" to submit a declaration stating that neither they nor any member of their family possesses a 2002 linkage document or any of the 13 documents prescribed by the EC, but have been residing in the area for a long time.

The form also reportedly includes a provision for certification by at least five valid voters of the booth concerned, who must provide their EPIC numbers and signatures confirming that they know the applicant.

There are 32 lakh "unmapped voters" in the state.

Sources in the poll body said information about the distribution of such forms had been received from Jadavpur and Hariharpara. The electoral registration officers reportedly provided these forms. —PTI

PM GETS NEW OFFICE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated the new PMO, named Seva Teerth, and two buildings of the Central Secretariat, called Kartavya Bhawan 1 and 2. On this occasion, Modi said the move from the South Block and North Block built during the British era was vital to shed every trace of colonial mindset. "Seva Teerth, and Kartavya Bhavan 1 and 2 mark an important milestone in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat. These reflect our commitment to citizen-centric governance and national progress," he said. Built at cost of ₹1,210 crore, the complex aims to replace older structures Shastri Bhawan, Nirman Bhawan, and Krishi Bhawan, with a centralised administrative complex—PTI

Rahul, farmers' unions discuss India-US trade deal

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Friday met leaders of farm unions from across the country in Parliament House complex, during which the need for a nationwide movement to oppose the India-US interim trade deal as well as safeguarding the livelihoods of farmers and farm labourers, was discussed.

During the meeting, the farm union leaders expressed their opposition to the India-US trade deal, and conveyed their deep concern for the livelihoods of farmers of corn, soyabean, cotton, fruits and nuts, the Congress said.

Gandhi said the trade deal has opened the door for agricultural imports and that many other crops would soon follow, according to the party. The farm leaders and Rahul Gandhi discussed the need for a large-scale national movement to oppose the deal, and safeguard the livelihoods of farmers and farm labourers, it said.The meeting comes a day after Gandhi asserted that the government can file cases or a privilege motion against him but he will stand strongly with farmers. He had also accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of being "anti-farmer" and "selling" the country through the India-US interim trade deal. —PTI

LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a meeting with the heads of farmers' unions, in New Delhi, on Friday —PTI

EPSTEIN FILES

Congress MP Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa & other Opposition MPs stage a protest during the Parliament's Budget session, in New Delhi, on Friday —PTI

Cong MPs protest against Puri, seek his resignation

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

- Several Congress MPs lined up outside the Parliament building and raised slogans against Puri, while demanding answers from him.

Congress MPs on Friday held a protest in Parliament House complex demanding the resignation of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri after his name figured in the 'Epstein Files' released in the US.

Several Congress MPs lined up outside the Parliament building and raised slogans against Puri, while demanding answers from him.

They also held a big banner with pictures of Puri and Jeffrey Epstein.

Puri had on Wednesday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for "passing innuendo" against him, asserting that he had met Epstein on a "few occasions", but his interactions with him had nothing to do with the crimes the convicted American sex offender was involved in.

Additionally, the stormy first part of the Budget session, which saw heated exchanges over the India-US interim trade deal and unpublished memoir of former army chief MM Naravane, concluded Friday and the House will now reassemble on 9 March.

The three-week recess period will allow standing committees to examine allocations to various central ministries given in the Union Budget.

The first part of the Budget Session began on 28 January.

The Lok Sabha witnessed dramatic scenes and repeated adjournments from 2 February afternoon after the Chair disallowed Gandhi to quote from Naravane's memoir.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, calling him a "habitual liar" and accusing him of misleading farmers with what he termed a "fake narrative" regarding the recent trade agreement with the US. He further accused the Congress leader of attempting to provoke farmers. —Agencies

'Kashmir valley's people grabbing land in Jammu'

JAMMU, 13 FEB

The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly witnessed an uproar on Friday after BJP member **Vikram Randhawa** claimed that people from Kashmir valley have grabbed land in Jammu city.

Replying to a question by Randhawa during Question Hour in the Assembly, Social Welfare Minister Sakina Itoo said that, according to records, land measuring 688 kanals (8 kanals is 1 acre) and 17 marlas (160 marla is 1 acre) in Tehsil Bahu and 579 kanals in Tehsil Jammu South is under illegal occupation. The Minister noted that since January 2025, 34 anti-encroachment drives have been carried out in Tehsils Bahu and Jammu South, leading to the retrieval of 140 kanals and 11 marlas of land belonging to the Jammu Develop ment Authority (JDA).

Meanwhile, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday asked the J&K government to clarify a Kashmiri Pandit leader's claim that a demographic change is being engineered in the Valley.

BJP leader Ashwani Kumar Chrungoo had recently told a national daily that the Centre was settling Hindus from outside there.

National Conference RS member Sajjad Ahmad Kichloo on Friday raised in the Rajya Sabha the plight of students from J&K who have been left in the limbo after a Rajasthan university failed to honour admission commitments.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, the MP said several students from J&K seeking admission to nursing courses at Mewar University have been denied admission. — PTI

Vijayan defends strikes despite business worries

T'PRUAM, 13 FEB

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Friday said strikes would continue in the state, following Thursday's total shutdown during an all-India strike against the Centre's alleged anti-labour policies. Speaking at a CII southern regional council meeting, Vijayan told a businessman that Kerala would remain at the forefront of such protests, as the government's labour codes adversely affect workers. A Hyderabad-based businessman highlighted the disruption's potential impact on investment. Vijayan also welcomed a suggestion to make the state's other three airports carbon-neutral, following Cochin International Airport Limited's successful model. He noted Kerala's achievements in ease of doing business and poverty eradication over the past decade. —PTI

SMELLING A RAT

Rohit raises suspicion on uncle Ajit Pawar's plane crash

PUNE, 13 FEB

Citing a report in a section of foreign media on the Air India Flight AI-171 crash last year, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Friday said it has strengthened his suspicion regarding the plane crash that killed his uncle and former Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Thursday said the probe into the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad was still in progress and no final conclusions have been reached. AAIB said media reports suggesting the probe into the accident has been finalised are "incorrect and speculative".

"After seeing the news (in a section of foreign media) that the pilot himself had turned off the fuel switch in the Ahmedabad aircraft crash, the suspicion expressed regarding Ajit Dada's plane accident has gained further strength," said Rohit Pawar in a post on X.

The NCP (SP) leader's remarks came days after he expressed suspicion of a possible "sabotage" in the crash in which Ajit Pawar was killed.

He demanded action against the company that owned the aircraft involved in the crash.

Senior NCP leader Praful Patel on Friday said the immediate priority was to strengthen the party's organisation and rally begin Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, who is set to take over as the outfit's national president in the next fortnight following the death of Ajit Pawar.

Sunetra Pawar is the sole candidate for the party's national president's post, Praful Pate said —PTI

NCP (SP) leader Rohit Pawar has expressed suspicion of a possible 'sabotage' in the crash in which Ajit Pawar was killed —PTI

Chennithala, Tharoor to lead Kerala Cong poll panel

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Congress has set up two key panels for the upcoming Kerala Assembly polls, with Ramesh Chennithala and Shashi Tharoor appointed chairman and co-chairman, respectively, of the party's campaign committee.

Tharoor's appointment assumes significance as it comes days after he met Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi for redressal of his grievances, after which he said "all is good" and "we are all on the same page".

Since then, Tharoor has been seen speaking prominently for the Congress, and also initiated the discussion on the Union Budget in the Lok Sabha.

Congress president Kharge has approved the proposal for the constitution of the campaign committee and the manifesto committee of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee for the upcoming Assembly elections, a party statement said.

While Chennithala has been named the chairman of the campaign committee, Tharoor has been appointed its co-chairman.

Congress MP Shafi Parambil will be the convenor of the campaign committee with Hibi Eden, Roji M John, C R Mahesh, Mathew Kuzhalnadan, Ramya Haridas, M Liju and Deepthi Mary Varghese as members. Congress MP Benny Behanan will be the chairman of the manifesto committee, with the party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha, Kodikkunnil Suresh, as its co-chairman.

The manifesto committee will have Dean Kuria kose and Jebi Mather as members. —PTI

Pappu Yadav walks out of jail in a 30-year-old case

PATNA, 13 FEB

Independent MP Pappu Yadav, who was arrested last week in a three-decade-old case, walked out of jail on Friday after being granted bail by a Patna court.

Yadav, who represents the Purnea Lok Sabha seat, was arrested in connection with a 1995 forgery case. Though he was granted bail on Tuesday, his release was withheld by the court due to two other cases lodged against him.

After coming out of jail, Yadav attacked his political detractors and alleged that senior police officers were conspiring to get him killed.

He thanked politicians across party lines, including Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Tej Pratap Yadav, Digvijay Singh, Manoj Jha, Anand Mohan, Asaduddin Owaisi and others for supporting him during his arrest period. Yadav also alleged that a conspiracy was in place to get him killed in the hospital as well. —PTI

Bizman killed in Dehradun, second murder in 48 hours

DEHRADUN, 13 FEB

A businessman was allegedly shot dead by unknown assailants near Silver City Cinema in Dehradun city early Friday morning, police said. This is the second murder in the city in the last 48 hours and the third in 11 days. Dehradun SP (City) Pramod Kumar said that the incident occurred at around 1.15 am when Vikram Sharma, 50, was coming out of a gym. He added that Sharma owned a stone crusher in Udham Singh Nagar district. On Wednesday, a gas agency owner was shot dead in broad daylight outside the Tibetan Market. On 2 February, a 22-year-old woman was murdered with her throat slit, police said. The police have registered murder cases and have launched investigations, the SP said —*PTI*

— *ANI*

19 students fall ill after taking too many iron tablets

CHANDRAPUR, 13 FEB

Nineteen students from a Zilla Parishad school in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district fell ill and had to be hospitalised after apparently consuming an excessive dose of anti-anaemia tablets, officials said on Friday. A probe has been ordered after the incident was reported from Bhamdeli village. Students are given iron tablets every Monday. However, some students consumed more tablets on Tuesday when teachers were not around. 19 students complained of nausea, dizziness on Wednesday night. Doctors said the 16 students are stable and are under observation. —*PTI*

— *FREEPIK*

Toxic substance mistook for liquor; four dead, 1 critical

BHILWARA, 13 FEB

Four people, including three women, died and one person was critical after allegedly consuming a toxic chemical mistaking it for liquor in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district, police said on Friday. The incident took place late Thursday night in Aloli village. Police said that they were labourers and had attended a wedding on 10 February. They brought some bottles with them, assuming they contained liquor. After they fell sick, they were rushed to a hospital, but four of them died, he said. —*PTI*

— *SCREENGRAB*

Odia singer Geeta Patnaik suffers stroke, in ICU

CUTTACK, 13 FEB

Noted Odia playback singer Geeta Patnaik was admitted to a private hospital here on Friday after she suffered a brain stroke, her family said. Her condition is stated to be critical and she is in ICU, her husband Gopal Batra told reporters. "Doctors have not given any assurance as of now. Her blood pressure shot up and caused several clots in the brain," Batra said. Another relative of Patnaik said that she is on ventilator and is under the observation of neurosurgeons. Patnaik developed uneasiness while attending a literary meeting in Bhubaneswar on Thursday night. She was shifted to the private hospital in Cuttack at around 3 am. —*PTI*

'No need for new guidelines for Naravane's book'

Rules already exist, says Defence Secretary

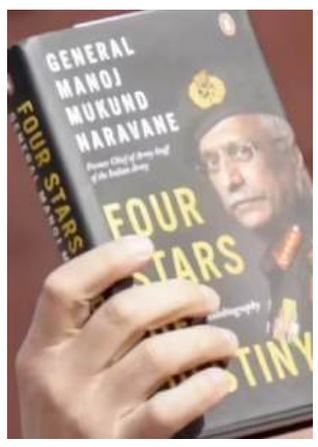
NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said on Friday that he is not aware of any proposal to introduce new guidelines for retired Army officials for writing books, amid the controversy surrounding the unpublished memoirs of former Army chief MM Naravane.

Singh said that existing rules already govern such matters, including the Official Secrets Act (OSA). He added that the key issue is not the absence of guidelines, but whether any rule had been bypassed.

"I do not know whether new guidelines are being considered. There are existing guidelines, and the Official Secrets Act applies. In this case, the issue is not that guidelines do not exist; the issue is whether someone has tried to bypass them. I know that Central agencies are looking into this," Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

A political row had erupted after Rahul Gandhi attempted to cite General Naravane's memoir, titled 'Four Stars of Destiny,' in the Lok Sabha, raising the 2020 standoff against China during the Budget Session.



The memoirs of military officers are governed by the Official Secrets Act, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said — *ANI*

- The Defence Secretary said that the main issue is not the absence of guidelines, but whether any existing rule had been broken. Central investigation agencies are now looking into the matter, the Secretary added

The Delhi Police, on 9 February, took cognisance of information found on social media platforms and news forums claiming that a preprint copy of the book 'Four Stars of Destiny' is being circulated and the Special Cell has filed a case into the "purported leak/breach of an unapproved publication."

On Thursday, the Delhi Police Special Cell had questioned Penguin India officials for two days in connection with the alleged leak of former Army Chief General MM Naravane's book. — *ANI*

Interfaith marriage put off in Meerut amid 'love jihad' claims

MEERUT, 13 FEB

An interfaith marriage scheduled to be held in Meerut on Friday was postponed after protests by Hindu organisations, officials said.

The marriage between a Hindu woman from Ganganagar and a Muslim man was to take place at a resort. A controversy erupted over the groom's name, with some Hindu groups alleging that his identity had been concealed and terming the case as "love jihad."

In view of a call for a "mahapanchayat" outside the wedding venue by the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Suraksha Sangathan, the administration deployed the police and the resort cancelled the booking.

The woman's uncle lodged a complaint at the Ganganagar police station alleging religious conversion and cheating by the man. Police said a case was registered on 9 February and an investigation is underway.

Sachin Sirohi, the president of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Suraksha Sangathan, said confusion arose after the groom's name was printed as "Sahil" on the wedding card, while another name, "Shahvez," later surfaced.

- A controversy erupted over the groom's name, with Hindu groups alleging that his identity had been concealed and that it was a case of "love jihad." Soon the police had to be called

The woman said "Sahil" was a nickname given by her mother and denied any fraud. She said her father had died in 2023 and that her family has a property dispute with her uncle, who filed the complaint.

Identifying herself as a Buddhist, she said the marriage was to be solemnised as per Buddhist rituals. — *PTI*

Bengal court clears alternative cancer therapy expert

KOLKATA, 13 FEB

A court in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district has exonerated an expert in alternative cancer therapy from the charges of making false claims.

Following the exoneration, a PMLA court has also acquitted Aradeep Chatterjee of the money laundering charges that were brought by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) based on the criminal case initiated by the state police in June 2017.

His homoeopathic doctor father, Ashim Kumar Chatterjee, who had also been arrested, was honourably discharged of the charge of assisting him.

Aradeep was apprehended in June 2017 for unlawfully treating cancer patients and was booked for impersonation, forgery, criminal conspiracy and abetment. The police had also arrested his father in August 2017 for extending unlawful assistance to his son. Based on the charge sheets, the ED lodged a case in 2017, following which their properties were attached, and a case was lodged in the ED court at Bichar Bhavan. — *PTI*

ENSURE VICTIMS' REHAB: SC

SC seeks CBI's status report on Manipur violence probe

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Vehicles burning during the Manipur ethnic riots in 2023 which claimed the lives of hundreds of people —*ANI*

The Supreme Court asked the CBI on Friday, which is probing 11 FIRs related to the 2023 Manipur ethnic violence cases, to submit a status report within two weeks.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also mooted the idea that instead of the SC, the Manipur High Court, which has a new chief justice, or the Gauhati High Court or both should monitor the trials.

It also asked the central and Manipur governments to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the Justice Gita Mittal committee on rehabilitation of the victims of the ethnic violence.

The court-appointed committee comprising Justice Mittal, the former chief justice of Jammu and Kashmir, and Justices Shalini P Joshi, a former judge of the Bombay High Court, and Asha Menon, an ex-judge of the Delhi High Court, have so far submitted several reports on rehabilitating the victims.

At the outset, senior advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for one of the woman victims who passed away recently, said that she be substituted by her mother and accused that the CBI did not even inform her that a chargesheet in her rape case was filed.

Grover said the Kuki woman died last month from an illness linked to the trauma she suffered after being gang-raped. — *PTI*

BAIL FOR FILMMAKER VIKRAM BHATT'S WIFE IN CHEATING CASE

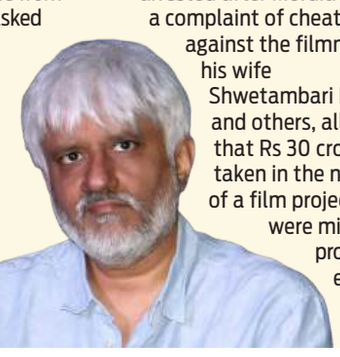
NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Supreme Court granted bail on Friday to filmmaker Vikram Bhatt's wife Shwetambari Bhatt in a cheating case.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi ordered her release from Udaipur jail and asked the Chief Judicial Magistrate to pass the bail order delineating the terms and conditions.

The court also issued notices to complainant Ajay Murdia, the founder of Indira IVF and Fertility Centre and a resident of Udaipur, and the Rajasthan government for 19 February.

The two have been in jail since 7 December 2025, when they were arrested in Mumbai and brought to Udaipur. Vikram Bhatt was arrested after Murdia filed a complaint of cheating against the filmmaker, his wife Shwetambari Bhatt and others, alleging that Rs 30 crore taken in the name of a film project were misappropriated. — PTI



SC asks HP govt, SEC to hold local polls by 31 May

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The Supreme Court extended from April 30 to May 31 the deadline fixed by the Himachal Pradesh High Court for holding polls to local bodies in the state.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi took note of the plea filed by the principal secretary of the HP government on Friday and also extended the HC's deadline of 28 Feb to 31 March for completing delimitation. On 9 January, the HP High Court had rejected the Sukhvinder Singh government's plea to defer elections to panchayati raj bodies by six months, and directed it to hold the polls before 30 April. — *PTI*

Student runs over 6, child dies

LUCKNOW, 13 FEB

A six-year-old boy was killed, and four people were injured after a school student returning from a farewell party rammed his car into an autorickshaw and pedestrians in the Banthra area here, police said on Friday.

DCP (Lucknow South) Nipun Agarwal said the accused has been taken into custody and the car impounded. He said the injured are out of danger.

The Swift car, driven by 21-year-old Gaurab Singh, hit an autorickshaw before ploughing into people walking along the roadside near a Hanuman temple at around 6 pm on Thursday.

Police said the accused is a class 12 student. He has a valid driving licence, they said. The accused claimed that he got "confused" between the brake and accelerator and that a tyre burst, leading to the accident, police said. Talking to PTI outside a private hospital here, Nitin, the son of one of those injured, said his father was alone in his autorickshaw, when it was struck by the speeding car. — *PTI*

The scene after the car rammed an auto and pedestrians *SCREENGRAB*

UP man opposes people urinating near house, killed

PRAYAGRAJ, 13 FEB

A 45-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death after he objected to some wedding guests urinating near his house in the Naini area of Prayagraj district, police said on Friday, adding that six of the 12 accused have been arrested.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Karchhana) Sunil Kumar said that the police received information on the helpline number 112 on Thursday night about a scuffle outside a banquet hall in Madauka, where a man had been severely assaulted.

When police arrived near Sanjay Guest House, they found the victim, Rajesh Nishad. A wedding ceremony for the daughter of one Nanku Chaurasia was taking place at the guest house.

The Assistant Commissioner of Police said some members of the wedding procession were allegedly urinating near Nishad's house.

When he objected, an argument ensued, and the accused attacked him with an iron rod. Nishad was taken to the hospital in a critical condition, where doctors declared him dead, Assistant Commissioner of Police Kumar said, adding that the body has been sent for autopsy to a nearby government hospital.

Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's family, a case has been registered against 12 persons, police said.

The Assistant Commissioner of Police said that six people, including the main accused, identified as Sunil Kanojia, have been arrested.

Kanojia is posted as a police constable in Mau district and had come to attend his cousin's wedding, he added. — *PTI*

6 KILLED BY WILD ELEPHANTS IN JHARKHAND

RANCHI, 13 FEB

Six people, including four of a family, were trampled on Friday by a herd of wild elephants that entered Gondwar village in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district. A child from the same family was injured during the stampede.

Hazaribag East Divisional Forest Officer Vikas Kumar Ujjwal confirmed that the child is being treatede at Sadar Hospital. Ujjwal said, "We alerted villagers as it entered the area, but when people tried to flee, six were trampled to death." — *PTI*

DAD OF SLAIN STUDENT DIES BEFORE $29 M SETTLEMENT

ADONI, 13 FEB

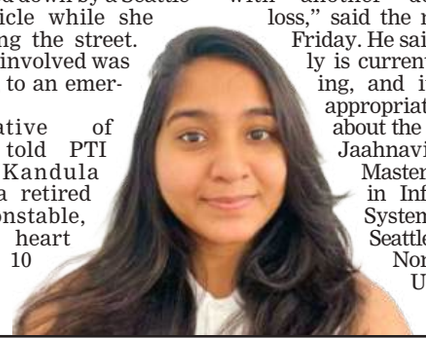
- Jaahnavi died on 23 January 2023, when she was knocked down by a Seattle police vehicle while she was crossing the street

The family of Jaahnavi Kandula, a 23-year-old Indian student killed when a US police car hit her a few years ago, suffered a second blow after her father passed away just two days before the announcement of a compensation of USD 29 million.

Jaahnavi's life was cut short on 23 January 2023, when she was knocked down by a Seattle police vehicle while she was crossing the street. The officer involved was responding to an emergency call.

A relative of Jaahnavi told PTI that Kandula Srikanth, a retired police constable, died of a heart attack on 10 February.

"His (Srikanth's) last rites were conducted on Wednesday in Adoni, as the family grappled with another devastating loss," said the relative on Friday. He said the family is currently mourning, and it was not appropriate to speak about the settlement.



Jaahnavi was a Master's student in Information Systems at the Seattle campus of North eastern University. — *PTI*

DELHI TRIPLE MURDER

Killer occultist used pics, 'djinn' ritual

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

The investigation into the Peeragarhi triple murder case has revealed disturbing details about the arrested occultist, including allegedly asking clients to send photographs of women and promising them 'dhanvarsha' after a 'djinn' establishes 'physical contact' with them, police said on Friday.

Kamruddin alias Baba, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad, was arrested on Thursday and sent to five-day police custody in connection with the killing of three people whose bodies were found inside an abandoned car on the Peeragarhi flyover on 8 February.

Police found that the accused allegedly prepared a mixture of 'sulphas' (aluminium phosphide, a controlled pesticide), sleeping pills and a cold drink, which the three victims were made to consume, leading to their immediate death.

Police said Kamruddin allegedly promised his clients a windfall ('dhanvarsha') if they paid him around Rs 2 lakh, and had a woman in their family matching specific physical descriptions like tall, with long hair, through whom a 'djinn' would establish 'physical contact' without the person realising it.

When clients raised doubts after no results, he allegedly cited reasons such as the woman being bitten by an animal or having undergone surgery. — *PTI*

The occultist, Kamruddin alias Baba, being escorted by cops after his arrest *SCREENGRAB*

- Kamruddin alias Baba, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad, was arrested on Thursday and sent to five-day police custody in connection with the killing of three people whose bodies were found in an abandoned car on a flyover

CRY FOR RESTORATION

A prohibitory order banning gatherings of more than five people appeared to have little effect, as hundreds of supporters assembled at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal, calling for the restoration of the monarchy as former king Gyanendra Shah arrived. Nepal abolished the monarchy in 2008, but pro-monarchy demonstrations resurfaced last year amid economic distress and political instability. Since the abolition, Gyanendra, Nepal's last king, has been living in his private residence in Kathmandu *—PTI*

BNP's win likely to thaw India-B'desh ties

A positive turn is likely in the ties between India and Bangladesh after a period of more than 18 months that saw the relations being marred by frostiness, as the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is set to secure a clear mandate in the neighbouring country's election, strategic affairs experts said on Friday.

As the BNP, led by Tarique Rahman, cruised towards a sweeping victory in the landmark parliamentary polls, many former Indian ambassadors welcomed the outcome and said this is a "good news" for Bangladesh, its people and those who are "friends of Bangladesh".

Many other former diplomats and strategic affairs experts, including those who have served in Bangladesh, also saw the BNP's imminent victory in the 13th parliamentary election as a development that bodes well for the India-Bangladesh ties.

The election assumed significance as it was held on 12 February after a period of tumultuous political vacuum, instability and fragile security situation, including widespread attacks on minorities, after the student-led protests brought down the 15-year rule of Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. The BNP is set to return to power after a gap of two decades.

BJP MP and former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla described the poll outcome as a "good news" and said the results have "vindicated" the sentiments of the people of Bangladesh.

Shringla, among other key assignments, has also served as India's high commissioner to Bangladesh, and keenly watched the developments in the region.

According to media reports, the BNP has bagged more than 151 seats in the 300-member Parliament and is likely to win more seats. The Jamaat-e-Islami, a hardline party known to be close to Islamabad, was heading or winning in around 75 seats.

"I think in many senses, we have come full circle and the people of Bangladesh have voted for a party that represents political interest. It is a pro-Liberation party and it believes in the spirit of 1971, as opposed to the Jamaat-e-Islami, which was opposed to the Liberation struggle of Bangladesh in 1971," Shringla said.

AI

Supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party gather amid the party's lead in the general elections, in Dhaka *—PTI*

India played an instrumental role in the Liberation War of 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh, the territory which was known as East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971.

The August 2024 uprising that unseated Hasina had also seen in its aftermath several symbols of the Liberation War being attacked by protesters, including the toppling of an imposing statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the torching of his old residence in Dhaka.

Rahman or Mujib, as he was popularly called, was given the epithet of the Father of the Nation, or Bangabandhu, and his legacy has been a binding factor between the two countries. The Park Street in New Delhi was renamed after Mujibur Rahman, the father of Hasina, ahead of the latter's 2017 visit to India.

The preceding 18-month period has also seen many incidents of attacks on minorities being reported in Bangladesh.

India continues to monitor reports of attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, including on their houses and places of worship, and New Delhi has "consistently raised" the issue with authorities in Dhaka, the government informed Rajya Sabha on 29 January.

Shringla said the BNP chief has made "some positive statements about his intentions to maintain good relations with India, to ensure that minorities are protected in his country".

"And cooperation with Bangladesh, most immediate neighbour, would be one that would be mutually beneficial to both sides. It is all good news and I think the results are a vindication of the way the people of Bangladesh want this country to go," he said.

The former envoy, however, said, it does not mean that the "spectre of a move towards a communal, radical ... and Islamisation of the country is over". It is an important time for the pro-Liberation, largely secular forces of Bangladesh to "come together on a united front to counter these forces" that would "represent, in many senses, the end of the idea of Bangladesh", he said.

India had said on Thursday that it would wait for the poll outcome in Bangladesh and then look at the issues that are there. It is becoming increasingly clear that Rahman is set to become the prime minister and replace the interim government headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

The Awami League party of Hasina was barred from contesting the polls.

Veena Sikri, who served as India's high commissioner to Bangladesh from 2003 to 2006, said the Jamaat-e-Islami has been "rejected" by the people of Bangladesh.

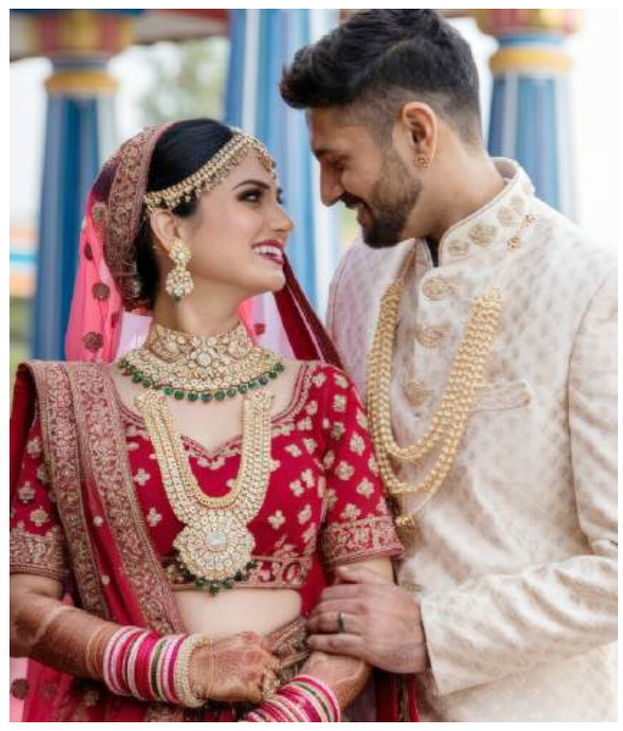
The BNP getting a two-thirds majority is a "reaffirmation of the people of Bangladesh supporting democratic values", she told PTI.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi warmly greeted Rahman on his "decisive victory" in Bangladesh's parliamentary election and said he looks forward to working with him to advance common development goals.

In another post on X, Modi said: "Delighted to speak with Mr. Tarique Rahman. I congratulated him on the remarkable victory in the Bangladesh elections." *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

India's median age for marriage now 29: Report



The median age for marriage among Indian singles has risen from 27 to 29 over the past decade, while the number of people seeking a second marriage has increased by "43 per cent", reflecting shifting attitudes towards partner search and commitment, according to a report released on Thursday.

The data-led report, "The Big Shift: How India Is Rewriting the Rules of Partner Search and Marriage", conducted by matrimony platform Jeevansathi, analysed its user trends between 2016 and 2025 along with survey insights from over 30,000 active users in 2026.

"Over the last decade, the median age of (Jeevansathi) users initiating their partner search moved from 27 to 29 years, with 50 per cent of users now beginning the process at 29. The shift indicates that financial stability, career growth and personal readiness are taking precedence over early marriage timelines," the report said.

The study also recorded a sharp rise in remarriage seekers.

In 2016, 11 per cent of users on the platform were looking for a second marriage where as by 2025, the figure had risen to 16 per cent — a 43 per cent increase over 10 years.

"Fifteen per cent of interest received by divorced profiles now comes from individuals who have never been married, while one in six success stories on the platform involves a second marriage, signalling a gradual decline in the stigma around divorce," it added.

The findings also point to a broader redefinition of marriage priorities, with 90 per cent of users saying finding the "right person" matters more than reaching a certain age or income level.

The report also observed a sharp decline in caste as a strict preference, from 91 per cent of users marking caste as a non-negotiable criterion in 2016 to 54 per cent in 2025.

"The trend is more pronounced in metros, where only 49 per cent consider caste as a 'strict field'," it pointed out.

Marriage decisions are also becoming more individual-led, as, according to the data, 77 per cent of profiles today are created and managed by users themselves, compared to 67 per cent in 2016, while family-managed profiles have reduced from 33 per cent to 23 per cent.

However, 69 per cent of respondents said parental involvement makes the process easier, indicating an emerging hybrid model that balances autonomy with family participation.

On evolving gender roles, only 8 per cent of users believe one partner should be the sole breadwinner.

As per the report, an overwhelming 87 per cent of men are comfortable marrying a woman who earns more than them, while 15 per cent of women are open to marrying men who earn less.

"Over the last decade, Indian singles have become more intentional — choosing compatibility, shared values and emotional readiness over rigid filters or timelines. Marriage today is increasingly self-led, yet deeply collaborative, where individuals take charge of decisions while families continue to play an important role," said Rohan Mathur, chief business officer, Jeevansathi. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

China tightens monopoly over rare minerals to counter US push

- China accounts for about 70 per cent of global rare earth mining and nearly 90 per cent of their processing. The minerals are critical for manufacturing electronics, automobiles, wind energy, and defence equipment and a host of modern gadgets. Beijing halted the exports of the key elements to use them as leverage to expand its trade interests. China also restricted the exports of the rare-earth metals to India, resulting in shortages in automobile and other industries.

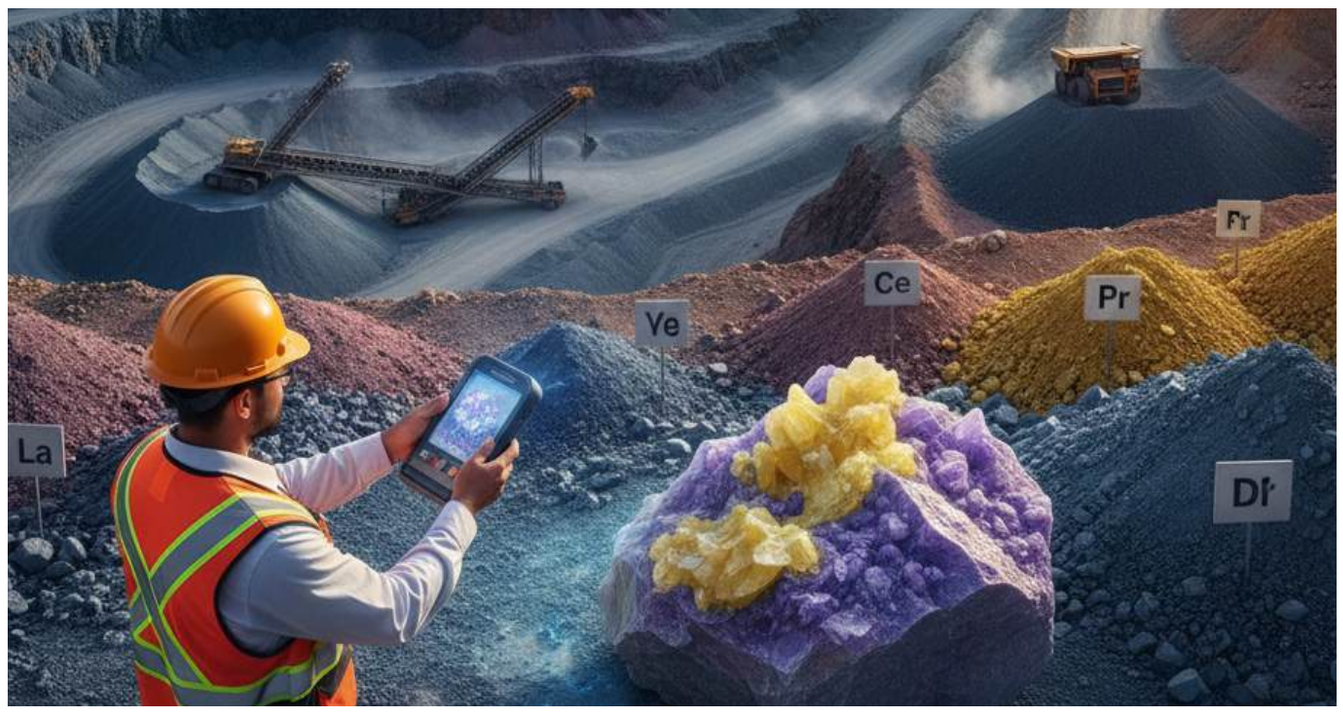
China has stepped up efforts to consolidate its monopoly over rare earth metals to counter the United States move to form an international alliance with over 50 nations, including India, to secure the supply chains of the precious metals to reduce reliance on Beijing.

Early this week, Chinese Premier Li Qiang visited Ganzhou in Jiangxi province, one of the world's largest production bases for heavy rare earth elements, a strategic resource essential to a range of hi-tech industries, where he called for China to consolidate its lead in industries like rare earths, over which it has a strategic edge over Washington.

Li also visited the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Ganjiang Innovation Academy, toured critical mineral producers, and had a meeting with local business leaders and researchers, official media reported.

"The value of rare earths in boosting advanced manufacturing and green, low-carbon transformation is increasingly prominent," he said.

China's dominance of global mining and processing of the minerals has become a crucial strategic advantage in recent years, giving it vital leverage when sparring with the US over a string of trade and technology disputes.



Li also met producers of the critical minerals, local business leaders and researchers during his tour, Xinhua reported.

"The value of rare earths in boosting advanced manufacturing and green, low-carbon transformation is increasingly prominent," he said.

Li's visit comes in the backdrop of intensified efforts by the US to form an international alliance after China increased its chokehold on its exports of rare earth metals to the US, EU, India and various other countries, creating supply chain chaos of the precious metals.

China accounts for about 70 per cent of global rare earth mining and nearly 90 per cent of their processing.

The minerals are critical for manufacturing electronics, automobiles, wind energy, and defence equipment and a host of modern gadgets.

Beijing halted the exports of the key elements to use them as leverage to expand its trade interests.

China used its chokehold on rare earth exports to force US President Donald Trump to cut high tariffs and settle for a quid pro quo deal under which Beijing had agreed to resume rare-earth supplies to Washington, lifting the ban on exports of semiconductor chips.

China also restricted the exports of the rare-earth metals to India, resulting in shortages in automobile and other industries.

After this, the Trump administration, early this month, launched a major initiative to build a "metallic alliance" with over 50 nations, including India, to secure critical mineral supply chains and reduce reliance on China.

The US government has initiated a USD 12 billion stockpile strategy called "Project Vault" to finance domestic and allied mining and processing.

In Ganzhou, Li signalled the importance of solidifying China's competitiveness in traditional industries to spur on technological innovation, calling for expanding the application of rare earths in fields like green energy and new materials, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

He also chaired a meeting of the State Council, China's cabinet, on harnessing artificial intelligence to empower other industries.

Li urged policymakers to deepen their grasp of AI development trends and advance innovations in algorithms and large language models, increase China's supply of high-quality data and computing power, and proactively explore new technological pathways. He said the goal was to make breakthroughs across the entire AI chain.

"We must cultivate an ecosystem forming synergy from data, computing, electricity, network resources, and software and hardware," he said. *—PTI*

BNP decimates Jamaat & NCP

Tarique seeks to lead Bangladesh through tense political period

DHAKA, 13 FEB

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) top leader Tarique Rahman is set to become the Prime Minister for the first time after securing a landslide victory in the 13th parliamentary elections.

His party decimated its long-time ally turned opponent Jamaat-e-Islami. BNP was in power earlier between 2001 and 2006 when Jamaat was its crucial partner.

Jamaat's key ally, the National Citizen Party, formed by the Students Against Discrimination, which led the mass protests against Hasina in August 2024, failed to convert its initial popularity into votes and won just six seats. Islami Andolon Bangladesh won one seat, and independent candidates seven.

59.44% voter turnout

The Jamaat raised allegations of "abnormal delays" and "result tampering," warning that it would launch a protests. However, the Election Commission dismissed the allegations.

More than 2,000 candidates, including several independents, were in the fray for 299 of the 300 parliamentary constituencies. The Election Commission made elaborate security arrangements for the elections, deploying nearly 1 million security personnel -- the largest-ever in the country's electoral history.

Tarique returned to Bangladesh last December after 17-years of self-exile during the Awami League's rule. Five days after his return and amid a massive welcome, Rahman was struck by a tragedy as his mother and former prime minister Khaleda Zia died after a prolonged illness.

Tarique has postponed his election win celebrations due to the tragedy and Friday prayers.

A soft-spoken Rahman drew massive crowds as he spearheaded the campaign for his party.

Since his return, Rahman adopted an approach of avoiding inflammatory rhetoric and calling instead for restraint and reconciliation despite the bitter relations of his family and himself in with the deposed Awami League regime.

He studied international relations at the University of Dhaka, dropped out, and later started businesses in textiles and agro products. Under the Awami League rule, Rahman became a central target of several corruption and criminal cases.

He has always denied the allegations, calling them politically motivated. He was acquitted in all cases during Muhammad Yunus' interim rule following Hasina's ouster.

He now seeks to revive the economy and revitalise the political institutions.

Rahman has acknowledged that the task ahead of him in the country of 170 million people would be daunting, with the recovery of a shattered economy being a key challenge. —*PTI*

BNP leader Tarique Rahman leaves from his residence to offer prayers at a mosque, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on Friday. He is all set to return to power after a gap of two decades —*PTI*

NCP leader who wanted India's North East wins big

National Citizen's Party (NCP) leader Hasnat Abdullah won the Comilla-4 Parliamentary seat. He had earlier threatened to support or offer refuge to separatist or "anti-India forces" in the North East, or 'Seven Sisters'. Four states in the North East share borders with Bangladesh – Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. He had claimed that India was supporting destabilising forces in Bangladesh. "If Bangladesh is destabilised, the fire of resistance will spread beyond its borders," he had said in December. Abdullah secured over 1.6 lakh vote.

BNP's Hindu leader wins from Dhaka constituency

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, a senior BNP leader from the minority Hindu community, won the Dhaka-3 seat with 99,163 votes, defeating Jamaat candidate Md Shahinur Islam. The former state minister's win from the Dhaka seat comes in the backdrop of alleged harassment of Hindu's in the Muslim majority country. Separately, the lone Hindu candidate fielded by Jamaat party was defeated in the Khulna-1 constituency. Krishna Nandi received 70,346 votes to BNP's Amir Ejaz Khan 1,21,352 votes.

7 women candidates elected

Seven women candidates – primarily from the BNP have been elected to the Parliament. They are:

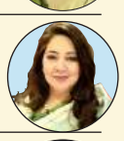
- **Afroza Khan Rita** (BNP) from Manikganj-3

- **Israt Sultana Elen Bhutto** (BNP) from Jhalokati-2

- **Tahsina Rushdir Luna** (BNP) from Sylhet-2

- **Shama Obaid** (BNP)from Faridpur-2

- **NayabYusuf Kamal** (BNP) from Faridpur-3



- **Farzana Sharmin Putul** (BNP) from Natore-1.

- **Rumin Farhana** (Independent) from Brahmanbaria-2.

BNP SWEEPS DHAKA

The BNP swept the capital city, winning a majority of the seats in Dhaka.

BNP 13	Jamaat 4
NCP 1	Others 2

60.26% vote 'Yes' for Constitutional Referendum

Bangladesh voted for Yunus' constitutional referendum – named the 'July Charter'. At least 48,074,429 people voted 'Yes' on the 84-point referendum, while 22,025,627 people voted 'No'. seeing a 60.26 per cent voter turnout

The polls for the charter were held simultaneously with the 13th Parliamentary elections. The reforms include term limits for Prime Ministers, the creation of a 100-seat Upper House of parliament alongside the current single parliamentary body, the 350-member parliament, stronger presidential powers, and greater judicial independence. It also seeks to increase representation for women in the Parliament.

The document is named after the student-led uprising that toppled the Awami League regime. Notably, it grants the protesters legal protection. It also seeks to investigate three elections 2014, 2018 and 2024, which were allegedly scarred by electoral malpractice. The Awami League won those three elections. 24 political parties supported the July Charter, but disagreed on its terms and possible implementation. Critics noted that the people were unlikely to understand what they were voting for, given the complex nature of the reforms . —*PTI*

> **I look forward to working closely with the new Bangladesh leadership to further strengthen our historic, brotherly multifaceted bilateral relations and advance our shared goals of peace, stability, and development in South Asia and beyond.**
>
> -Shehbazz Sharif, Pakistan Prime Minister

UN assembles AI panel amid US objections

UNITED NATIONS, 13 FEB

The UN General Assembly has approved a 40-member panel to assess AI risks, with the US and Paraguay voting against and Tunisia and Ukraine abstaining. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called it "a step toward global scientific understanding of AI," offering independent insight to help countries engage equally in AI governance. US Mission counsellor Lauren Lovelace criticised the panel as overreach, saying AI should not be dictated by the UN and warning against influence from authoritarian regimes. The 40-member panel, chosen from 2,600 applicants, features AI specialists and Nobel laureate Maria Ressa. Despite including both U.S. and Chinese experts, Ukraine is boycotting over the inclusion of a Russian member.—*PTI*

Mexico delivers aid to Cuba amid energy crisis

HAVANA, 13 FEB

Two Mexican Navy ships carrying over 800 tonnes of aid docked in Havana on Thursday, amid Cuba's deepening energy crisis caused by a US blockade. One ship delivered 536 tonnes of food and hygiene items, including milk, rice, beans, sardines, meat products, canned tuna, and vegetable oil; the second carried 277 tonnes of powdered milk. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel described US measures as an "energy blockade". Airlines have suspended or rerouted flights due to fuel shortages. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum pledged further aid while pursuing diplomatic efforts with the US to resume oil supplies, following Cuba's lost Venezuelan oil shipments and recent USD 7.5 billion losses from sanctions. —*PTI*

UK ban on 'terror group' Palestine action ruled illegal

LONDON, 13 FEB

Britain's High Court has ruled that the government acted unlawfully in designating Palestine Action a terrorist organisation, though the ban remains pending appeal. The bench of judges said the group's activities did not meet the "level, scale and persistence" required for proscription and described the ban as "disproportionate." The group had been banned after protesters against UK's support of Israel's Gaza offensive broke into a Royal Air Force base. Over 2,700 people have since been arrested for showing support, with 250 charged under the Terrorism Act. Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood intends to appeal, while the police will not arrest supporters in the meantime. —*PTI*

S Africa troops to fight crime, illegal mining

JOHANNESBURG, 13 FEB

South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa has announced the deployment of the South African National Defence Force to support police in tackling illegal mining and gang violence in Gauteng and Western Cape. In his State of the Nation address, Ramaphosa said organised crime poses the most immediate threat to democracy, economic stability and public safety. He highlighted gang crossfire affecting children in the Western Cape and communities in Gauteng being forced from their homes by illegal miners. South Africa records around 63 murders a day, with firearms widely used. Authorities say more than USD 3 billion in gold was lost to illegal mining in 2024. The government will also recruit 5,500 additional police officers and strengthen intelligence-led operations.—*PTI*

US sends world's largest aircraft carrier to Iran

WASHINGTON, 13 FEB

The US is moving the world's largest aircraft carrier- the USS Gerald R Ford- to the Middle East as President Donald Trump mulls striking Iran, sources said.

The US has already deployed the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and three guided-missile destroyers to the region, within the last two weeks.

The USS Ford was moved from the Mediterranean Sea to the Caribbean last October as the US ramped up its military presence around Venezuela, which culminated in the capture of its leader Nicholas Maduro in January. The USS Ford was deployed in June last year, meaning the crew will soon complete eight months of service, an unusually long amount of time.

The move comes shortly after Trump had a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington. Trump has been threatening Iran over its nuclear enrichment programme, which Tehran insisted was peaceful. Netanyahu wants the ongoing negotiations to also include restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile arsenal and its 'Axis of Resistance' – its support for proxy groups such as Hamas, Houthis and Hezbollah.

The US is moving the USS Gerald R Ford to the Middle East as President Donald Trump mulls striking Iran —*WIKIMEDIA*

While Trump said his meeting with Netanyahu was "very good", no conclusive plan was announced.

However, on Thursday, Trump said that Iran should "make a deal" or it could be "traumatic". —*Agencies*

FORMER OBAMA AIDE

Epstein Files: Goldman Sachs lawyer resigns

NEW YORK, 13 FEB

Kathy Ruemmler resigned from as top lawyer at investment bank, Goldman Sachs on Thursday. The former Obama White House counsel stepped down after leaked emails revealed a close relationship with Jeffrey Epstein.

In the email, she describes Epstein as an "older brother", downplaying the crimes of the late convicted sex trafficker.

Though Ruemmler has recently called Epstein a "monster," she previously referred to him as "Uncle Jeffrey" in emails and said she adored him before his 2019 arrest on new sex charges and subsequent death in jail.

After leaving the White House in 2014, Ruemmler received luxury handbags and a fur coat from Epstein. These gifts were received by her despite Epstein's 2008 conviction and status as a registered sex offender.

Kathy Ruemmle —*WIKIPEDIA*

In a statement a Goldman Sachs spokesperson said Ruemmler "regrets ever knowing him (Epstein)".

Earlier, Ruemmler distanced herself from the emails and stated that she would not resign from Goldman Sachs, a stance backed as recently as December by CEO David Solomon called her an "excellent lawyer" and expressed his full support. —*PTI*

Ukraine finds bodies of 2 Nigerians fighting for Russia

ABUJA, 13 FEB

The bodies of two Nigerians fighting for Russia have been found in eastern Ukraine, authorities have reported.

Hamzat Kazeen Kolawole and Mbah Stephen Udoka both served in the 423rd Guards Motor Rifle Regiment of the armed forces of the Russian Federation.

The deceased men signed their Russian military contracts in the second half of 2025 — Kolawole on 29 August and Udoka on 28 September.

Neither men received any military training. Kolawole is survived by a wife and three children in the West African.

Both Nigerians were killed in late November during an attempt to storm Ukrainian positions in Luhansk.

Russia has been accused of recruiting foreign men to fight in its war against Ukraine under the guise of offering dream jobs. —*PTI*

HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

T'land elephants to get birth control jabs

BANGKOK, 13 FEB

Thailand has begun using a birth control vaccine on wild elephants to curb a growing problem where human and animal populations encroach on each other, an issue in areas where farms spread into forests and elephants are squeezed out of their habitat.

The initiative is part of efforts to address confrontations that can turn deadly. As farmers cut down forests to make more farmland, elephants are forced to venture out of their shrinking habitats in search of food.

Last year, wild elephants killed 30 people and injured 29 in Thailand, according to official figures, which also noted more than 2,000 incidents of elephants damaging crops.

In 2025 wild elephants in Thailand reportedly killed 30 people and injured 29. Over 2,000 incidents of elephants damaging crops was reported —*x*

Sukhee Boonsang, director of the Wildlife Conservation Office, said that controlling the wild elephant population has become necessary as elephants living near residential areas rises sharply, increasing the risk of confrontations.

"If we don't take action, the impact on people living in these areas will continue to grow until it becomes unmanageable," he said.

The office obtained 25 doses of a US-made vaccine and conducted a two-year trial on seven domesticated elephants — using up seven doses of the vaccine — which yielded promising results, he said. He explained the vaccine doesn't stop female elephants from ovulating but prevents eggs from being fertilised.

The vaccine can prevent pregnancy for seven years and the elephants will be able to reproduce again if they don't receive a booster after that time expires. Experts will closely monitor the vaccinated elephants throughout the seven-year period. —*PTI*

Convicted Palestinians may now lose citizenship

RAMALLAH, 13 FEB

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu filed court documents on Thursday to revoke the citizenship of two Palestinian- Israeli citizens convicted of terrorism, marking the first test of a controversial 2023 law that could result in their deportation.

The case targets Mohamad Hamad, 48, from Jerusalem, who was convicted of terrorism-related offences, including shootings and weapons trafficking. According to court filings seen by The Associated Press, the state alleges Hamad received funds after his 2002 sentencing and served more than two decades in prison before his release.

Netanyahu argues that the severity of the attacks, combined with alleged payments from a Palestinian Authority fund, justifies revoking citizenship and expelling the offenders. If the court moves ahead, it would make Israel one of the few nations—including Bahrain—to revoke citizenship of people born with the status in their country. The request does not specify deportation destinations.

Benjamin Netanyahu —*WIKIPEDIA*

The 2023 law applies to citizens or permanent residents convicted of "committing an act that constitutes a breach of loyalty to the State of Israel," including terrorism. —*PTI*

— ANI

Rupee falls 3P to close at 90.64 against dollar

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 3 paise lower at 90.64 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and a negative trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said rupee traded in a narrow range with a weakening bias as a firm dollar limited the upside for emerging market currencies including the rupee. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.69 against the US dollar, and touched an intraday high of 90.60 and a low of 90.79 during the day. The dollar index was trading 0.10 per cent higher at 97.0. —*PTI*

— PTI

Silver falls to Rs 2.25L/kg, gold at Rs 1.58L/10gm

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Precious metals prices declined more than 5 per cent in the national capital on Friday, with silver declining to Rs 2.55 lakh per kilogram, while gold dropped to Rs 1.58 lakh per 10g amid subdued demand in the local market. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal slumped Rs 13,500, or 5.03 per cent, to Rs 2,55,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes). Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also dived Rs 2,400, or 1.5 per cent, to Rs 1,58,500 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). In the international market, spot silver gained USD 2.01, or 3 per cent, to USD 77.30 per ounce, while gold was trading nearly 1 per cent higher at USD 4,968.40 per ounce. The markets are now focusing on the US consumer price index.—*PTI*

Apple to open its sixth store in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Apple has revealed the barricade for its upcoming Apple Borivali store, its sixth in India and second in Mumbai, set to open on Thursday, 26 February. The company began its Indian retail journey with stores in Mumbai and Delhi in April 2023, followed by three openings in 2025, Apple Hebbal in Bengaluru, Apple Koregaon Park in Pune, and Apple Noida. The Borivali store's barricade features the peacock-inspired design first introduced at Apple Hebbal, and later used in Pune and Noida. Apple said the design reflects "confidence, detail, and a sense of arrival." The new store aims to support the city's growing community of start-ups and businesses, further strengthening Apple's presence in the country.—*PTI*

Inox Green Energy Q3 profit rises to Rs 25 crore

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Inox Green Energy Services on Friday posted a nearly five-fold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 24.66 crore for the December quarter, aided by higher income. It had reported a net profit 5.81 crore in October-December period of preceding 2024-25 financial year, the company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income rose to Rs 111.73 crore in the third quarter, from Rs 73.98 crore in the three-month period a year ago. The board also approved re-appointment of Mukesh Manglik as a whole-time director of the company with effect from May 19 for a further period of two years.The proposal remains subject to shareholders' approval. —*PTI*

Reliance secures US nod to import Venezuelan oil

Can buy oil directly from entity that extracts or owns it

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Reliance was a regular buyer of Venezuelan crude before the US slapped sanctions on the country in 2019-20. It bought oil when the US introduced a temporary relief in 2024 —*ANI*

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited has received a US general licence to purchase Venezuelan crude oil directly, enabling it to resume imports of discounted heavy feedstock that optimises refining margins.

Reliance had got in January a general licence from the US for buying Venezuelan oil directly, without violating sanctions.

The US eased sanctions on the South American nation's energy industry to resume the flow of oil from the country.

So far, the US has permitted the sale of Venezuelan oil through traders, but now a general licence will give authorisation to purchase of oil directly from an entity that has already extracted it from below ground or is in possession of it.

Reliance was a regular buyer of Venezuelan crude before the US slapped sanctions in 2019-20. It bought oil when the US introduced a temporary sanctions relief in 2024. And when Venezuelan oil started flowing again through traders this year, it bought 2 million barrels from Vitol.

Venezuela's crude grades, especially from the Orinoco Belt, are predominantly heavy and extra-heavy. Reliance's Jamnagar refineries are among the world's most complex and geared toward efficiently processing heavy, sour crudes, which trade at a deep discount to international benchmarks due to production challenges and logistical constraints.

Buying Venezuelan oil will allow Reliance to optimise its refining margins because these barrels can be upgraded into higher-value products like diesel, kerosene and LPG that fetch strong demand in India and export markets.

Also, Reliance's business model is built on integrated refining-petrochemical operations. Heavy crude with high residual content can be broken down into valuable petrochemical feedstocks. Access to cheaper Venezuelan heavy crude supports better petchem margins. —*PTI*

Sensex sinks 1k pts; Nifty tanks 336 pts

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled more than 1 per cent on Friday due to across-the-board selloff in metal, IT and commodity stocks, tracking sluggish global markets.

In a volatile session, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,048.16 points, or 1.25 per cent, to close at 82,626.76. During the day, the benchmark tanked 1,140.37 points, or 1.36 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 82,534.55.

The 50-share NSE Nifty plunged 336.10 points, or 1.30 per cent, to settle at 25,471.10. In the intraday trade, it slumped 362.9 points, or 1.4 per cent, to hit a low of 25,444.30.

Hindustan Unilever, Eternal, Titan, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Tata Consultancy Services, PowerGrid, Reliance Industries, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank and HCL Technologies were the major laggards.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finance and State Bank of India were the only gainers.

Domestic equities ended lower following a highly volatile session, weighed down by weak global cues ahead of the upcoming US inflation data.

"Sentiment gains from the US-India trade deal have faded as renewed AI-driven disruption fears weigh on risk appetite, with markets worrying that Indian IT firms dependent on the labour arbitrage model may face tougher competitive pressure than their Nasdaq peers," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors bought equities worth Rs 108.42 crore on Thursday, while domestic institutional investors were also net buyers of stocks worth Rs 276.85 crore. —*PTI*

India to have 50 airports in 5 yrs, boost realty growth: Naidu

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India aims to have 50 more airports in the next five years, creating huge opportunities for the real estate sector, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Friday.

The Minister also said that he is working actively to address issues related to height restrictions for buildings near airports without compromising on aviation safety.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and currently, has 165 operational airports.

A new airport or a new terminal is built every 33 days, Naidu said during the National Urban and Real Estate Development Conclave 2026 organised by Naredco in Delhi.

He said the real estate sector is projected to be worth USD 1 trillion by 2030 and further increase to be valued at USD 5-7 trillion by 2047.

He also emphasised the importance of focusing on rental housing and the quality of living in real estate development.

Meanwhile, Naidu also said a study is being conducted with the assistance of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to look into solutions that can address issues related to height restrictions for buildings around airports. An ICAO team is looking at the technologies as well as the aviation operations in different cities to prepare a report. ----*PTI*

India's passenger vehicle dispatches rise 13% in Jan

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Robust domestic demand propelled vehicle dispatches from manufacturers to dealers in January, with passenger vehicles rising 13 per cent year-on-year to 4,49,616 units, up from 3,99,386 units in January 2025, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) reported on Friday.

Two-wheeler sales surged 26 per cent to 19,25,603 units compared with 15,26,218 units a year earlier. Within this segment, scooter dispatches jumped 37 per cent to 7,50,580 units, while motorcycle wholesales increased 20 per cent to 11,26,416 units.

Three-wheeler dispatches also grew strongly, up 30 per cent to 75,725 units from 58,167 units in the same period last year.

"Passenger vehicles, two-wheelers and three-wheelers posted their highest-ever January sales in 2026, all recording double-digit growth compared to January 2025," said SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon.

The year has begun on a positive note, continuing the strong momentum seen in the previous quarter. —*PTI*

'AI rules must evolve to monitor technology'

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Sebi Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Friday flagged the risks posed by artificial intelligence in the financial system and said that regulations must evolve to supervise systems and technology, and manage the boundary between regulated finance and unregulated digital spaces.

Quoting Mustafa Suleyman, CEO of Microsoft AI, Pandey said the coming wave of AI, synthetic biology and other technologies would be a "compelling challenge" or "a predicament for humanity".

Addressing the ET Now Global Business Summit 2026, the top boss at the stock market regulator said that on one hand, AI offers powerful tools for surveillance and fraud detection, but it also brings risks, opacity, bias, and concentration of technological power.

"Regulation must therefore evolve from supervising institutions to supervising systems and technology. They must address concentration and interconnectedness risks, strengthen data governance and consent architecture, and manage the boundary between regulated finance and unregulated digital spaces," Pandey said.

He said algorithmic trading, digital platforms, and AI-driven decision making are now part of everyday market functioning. —*PTI*

India's Q1 edible oil imports fall 2%

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India's vegetable oil imports fell 2 per cent to 3.96 million tonnes in the first quarter of the 2025-26 oil year, industry data showed on Friday.

The decline was driven by lower soybean and sunflower oil purchases, which offset a rise in palm oil imports, according to the Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA).

Palm oil imports rose 18 per cent to 1.91 million tonnes in the November 2025–January 2026 quarter, up from 1.62 million tonnes a year earlier. Port stocks of palm oil stood at 486,000 tonnes on 1 February, up 33,000 tonnes from the previous month.

Crude soybean oil imports dropped 9 per cent to 1.20 million tonnes, while sunflower oil imports fell 15 per cent to 759,000 tonnes. Port stocks for soybean and sunflower oils were 190,000 tonnes and 185,000 tonnes, respectively.

Nepal exported about 102,000 tonnes of refined oils from India in November–December 2025.

Total edible oil stocks at Indian ports were 864,000 tonnes on 1 February. —*PTI*

Jindal Stainless & Indian Rly make salt containers

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

Jindal Stainless has partnered with the Indian Railways to manufacture India's first corrosion-resistant stainless steel salt containers, a move set to enhance rail logistics and reduce maintenance costs.

The 20-foot containers, fabricated entirely from 304-grade stainless steel, successfully underwent loading and unloading trials at Bhimasar, Gandhidham, Gujarat, on 10 February, 2026. Salt transport, particularly in coastal areas, is highly prone to corrosion, leading to frequent repairs, premature asset failure, and wastage of resources, said Jindal Stainless Managing Director Abhyuday Jindal.

He added that India's container market is growing steadily due to infrastructure expansion, port developments, and rising bulk commodity movement, requiring durable and sustainable materials.

As the country's largest stainless steel manufacturer, Jindal Stainless is driving value-added steel solutions for critical applications. The company has also signed an agreement with the Ministry of Steel under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) 1.2 scheme for speciality steel to produce high-end steel for advanced industrial use.—*PTI*

Jindal Stainless also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Steel to produce quality steel for industrial use—*JINDAL STAINLESS*

India must leverage FTAs to boost electronic exports: NITI

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India must address its structural cost disadvantages, leverage free trade agreements (FTAs) and promote manufacturing of strategic components to boost its electronics goods exports, a NITI Aayog's report said

According to NITI Aayog's Trade Watch Quarterly report, the electronics segment represents a USD 4.6 trillion global market. However, India's share in this market stands at only around 1 per cent for 2024. Key markets for high-tech components remain dominated by China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

The report laid emphasis on predictable domestic procurement, export finance, and regulatory simplification to attract investments.

These measures can anchor India's transition from a manufacturing base to a globally competitive electronics ecosystem and support the USD 500 billion manufacturing ambition by FY2030.

India should enhance market access and integration into global value chains through proactive trade facilitation, government procurement support, anchor investments, MSME participation, and higher domestic value addition. —*PTI*

CLIMATE-SMART CITIES

Kerala is 1st state to frame Urban Policy

T'PURAM, 13 FEB

The urban Policy is intended to serve as a foundational document for approaching urban development in a scientific manner —*PTI*

Kerala on Friday became the first state in the country to frame a comprehensive Urban Policy, laying out a long-term development roadmap towards an urban future.

The policy envisions Kerala in 2050 as "a continuous network of climate-smart cities and towns, ensuring scientific planning and good governance."

The state cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, approved the draft Urban Policy prepared by the Local Self Government Department.

The initiative was first announced in the 2023–24 state budget.

In December 2023, the government constituted the Kerala Urban Policy Commission, bringing together national and international experts. The commission submitted the Nava Kerala Urban Policy report to the Chief Minister in March 2025.

To hold wider discussions on the report, the government organised a global conference in Kochi in September. Suggestions were later incorporated into the final policy.

According to estimates by the Urban Policy Commission, Kerala is expected to become nearly 80 per cent urbanised by 2050.

Urban growth is projected to spread in a decentralised manner across densely populated regions between the high ranges and the coastal belt.

The Urban Policy is intended to serve as a foundational document for approaching urban development in a scientific manner, including in environmentally sensitive areas.

It also outlines ways to harness urbanisation to support the economic growth in the state. —*PTI*

RBI to revise Lead Bank Scheme to enhance efficacy

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

— PTI

The RBI on Friday proposed revised guidelines for the Lead Bank Scheme (LBS) to streamline operational aspects and enhance the effectiveness of the programme,

LBS, introduced in 1969 for coordinating development activities at the district levelaims at coordinating the activities of banks, government and other developmental agencies through fora to enhance the flow of credit to priority sectors for inclusive growth and deepening financial inclusion.

The proposed guidelines aim to fine-tune the objectives of the scheme -- the structure, membership and agenda of various fora; clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of key functionaries; and provisions to further strengthen the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) and lead district manager offices, among others.

SLBC Convenor Banks would coordinate the activities of all banks in the state, and regularly discuss with state government officials the operational problems in lending.

The Credit Deposit Ratio (CD ratio) should be monitored at different levels. Banks are required to achieve a CD Ratio of 60 per cent in respect of their rural and semi-urban branches. —*PTI*

Zimbabwe stun Aus by 23 runs

Siddique, Aryansh dazzle as UAE defeat Canada by 5 wickets

COLOMBO, 13 FEB

Zimbabwe rode on collective brilliance to pull off the first big upset of the ongoing T20 World Cup, stunning injury-ravaged former champions Australia by 23 runs here on Friday.

This was only the second time that the African nation defeated the traditional heavyweights in the format, having last beaten them back in the 2007 edition of the showpiece.

Riding on opener Brian Bennett's unbeaten 64 and useful contributions from other top-order batters, Zimbabwe posted a challenging 169 for 2 after Australia, who were without some of their frontline bowlers, invited them to bat.

The lower-ranked side then bowled Australia out for 146 in 19.3 overs on a sluggish pitch to register a famous win.

Pacer Blessing Muzarabani returned figures of 4/17, while Brad Evans (3/23), Wellington Masakadza (1/36), and Ryan Burl (1/9) also delivered with the ball for Zimbabwe.

It was a disaster for Australia in their pursuit of 170 as they suffered a top-order collapse and were reduced to 29 for 4 in 4.3 overs with Josh Inglis (8), Travis Head (17), Cameron Green (0), and Tim David (0) dismissed cheaply.

Muzarabani helps Zimbabwe stun Australia -PTI

Raza on Zimbabwe's shock win against Australia

Zimbabwe stand-in skipper Sikandar Raza described their stunning 23-run win over Australia as "unbelievable", saying the culture, unity, and environment built within the squad made the result possible. "Very happy and above all, very proud. Feeling of a brother whose younger brothers are achieving a lot together," he said at the post-match presentation.

Brief Scores: Zimbabwe: 169 for 2 in 20 overs (Brian Bennett 64 not out, Tadiwanashe Marumani 35, Ryan Burl 35; Cameroon Greem 1/6). Australia: 146 all out in 19.3 overs (Matt Renshaw 65, Glenn Maxwell 31; Blessing Muzarabani 4/17, Brad Evans 3/23).

Junaid Siddique's five-wicket haul was complemented by **Aryansh Sharma's** half-century as the United Arab Emirates defeated Canada by five wickets in their ICC Men's T20 World Cup match here on Friday.

Senior pacer Siddique headlined a disciplined bowling effort, returning with figures of 5/35 to help UAE restrict Canada to a below-par 150 for 7. Aryansh then struck an unbeaten 74 off 53 balls laced with six fours and three sixes, while Sohaib Khan also played a very useful knock of 51 off just 29 balls to guide UAE over the line with two balls to spare. Chasing the modest total, the UAE struggled to build momentum and lost wickets at regular intervals even as Aryansh held firm at one end. Left-arm spinner Saad Bin Zafar (3/14) dented the chase with three key strikes.

Junaid Siddique and Aryansh Sharma -PTI

UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem was the first to depart, falling to pacer Kaleem Sana. Zafar then dismantled the middle order, first dismissing Alishan Sharafu, who mistimed a cover drive to Nicholas Kirton at extra cover, before removing Mayank Kumar and Harshit Kaushik with catches at long-on and mid-wicket respectively.

United Arab Emirates 154 for 5 (Aryansh 74*, Sohaib 51, Zafar 3-14) beat Canada 150 for 7 (Thaker 50, Dhaliwal 34, Siddique 5-35) by five wickets —*PTI*

Curran for Taylor in Zimbabwe squad

The Event Technical Committee of the men's T20 World Cup on Friday approved Ben Curran as a replacement for Brendan Taylor in the Zimbabwe squad. The said committee comprises Wasim Khan (Chair, ICC General Manager Cricket), Gaurav Saxena (ICC General Manager Events & Corporate Communications, IBC representative), Hemang Amin (Tournament Director, host representative), and Shaun Pollock (Independent nominee)

Hardik is driving force behind Ishan Kishan's revival

MUMBAI, 13 FEB

Ishan Kishan set the stage for India's emphatic 93-run win over Namibia at the T20 World Cup last evening in Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium.

In the absence of Abhishek Sharma, Ishan blasted 61 off just 25 balls, as India brought up their fastest-ever T20 World Cup hundred.

Once Ishan perished, it was almost as if the Indian innings took a different course with Namibia's spinners, led by Gerhard Erasmus's four-wicket burst, until Hardik Pandya came in and belted a quickfire half-century of his own to take the team to a total of 209/9. It was almost fitting that Hardik took over from Ishan as the two former Mumbai Indians teammates came together for a chat after India picked up their second win of the tournament.

Not too long ago, when Ishan smashed his comeback century, scoring 103 against New Zealand in the fifth T20I, Hardik was his partner at the non-striker end, and the fact that he celebrated Kishan's milestone. —*PTI*

ICC T20 WC MATCHES TOMMORROW

Ireland rocked by Stirling injury ahead of must-win Oman clash

Reeling from two defeats and now without captain Paul Stirling due to a knee injury, Ireland will look to keep their fading Super Eight hopes alive when they take on fellow strugglers Oman in a Group B clash of the T20 World Cup here on ***Saturday 11 am***. Both teams have suffered two losses respectively and will be desperate to register their first victory in the tournament.While Ireland lost to co-hosts Sri Lanka and Australia by 20 and 67 runs respectively, Oman were trounced by Zimbabwe by eight wickets

Scotland renew rivalry with England with Super Eight spot at stake

A floundering England will square off against traditional sporting rivals Scotland here on ***Saturday 3 pm*** in a must-win T20 World Cup match that could well determine which of the two teams progresses to the Super Eight stage from Group C. West Indies sit atop with back-to-back wins, while Scotland, Italy, and England, all with one win each, are separated only by net run rate. Scotland holds the second spot thanks to their massive winover Italy. So, Saturday's clash could give either side a decisive edge in the race for second place as both are expected to win

Unbeaten NZ, South Africa eye group supremacy in high-stakes match

With Super 8s qualification virtually assured, unbeaten New Zealand and South Africa will clash here on ***Saturday 7 pm*** in what is shaping up as a straight fight for the top spot in their T20 World Cup group.Both teams have won their opening two matches, but through contrasting paths, setting up a contest that could determine not just Group D supremacy but also momentum heading into the Super 8s.After restricting Afghanistan to 182/6, they chased down the target in 17.5 overs, powered by Tim Seifert's 65 and brisk contributions from Glenn Phillips (42), Mark Chapman (28), and Daryl Mitchell (25 not out). Earlier, Seifert and Finn Allen had dismantled UAE in a 10-wicket win, overhauling 174 in just 15.2 overs.

-PTI

India A suffers seven-wicket loss against UAE

DUBAI, 13 FEB

United Arab Emirates captain Esha Oza led her side to a thumping seven-wicket victory over India A in their Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars 2026 opener on Friday at the Terdthai Cricket Ground in Thailand. Oza remained unbeaten on 72 (61) as UAE chased down a lowly 131 with four balls left. After choosing to bat, the Radha Yadav-led India A got off on the wrong foot. It continued to lose wickets at regular intervals, and pacer Samaira Dharnidharka was the tormentor-in-chief. She cleaned up India A's top order within the PowerPlay with three scalps. Anushka Sharma, who showed promise in the recently concluded Women's Premier League with the Gujarat Giants.—*PTI*

MP para-swimmer Lohiya becomes first Asian to cross Cook Strait

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India's Satendra Singh Lohiya has become the first Asian para-swimmer to cross the Cook Strait in New Zealand.

The 38-year-old Lohiya, who hails from the Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh, was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2024. ''Historic Achievement Cook Strait New Zealand Victory.

One of the world's most challenging sea routes, the Cook Strait, New Zealand, after successfully crossing it with my team, today I feel deeply emotional and immensely proud.... for the first time in Asia, a differently-abled swimmer has crossed the Cook Strait,'' Lohiya posted on social media on Friday.

The para swimmer, as per officials, reached New Zealand in the third week of January and began training in the extremely cold waters of the Strait to prepare for the attempt.

Lohiya swam for 23.6km in nine hours and 22 minutes to accomplish the feat, officials said.

Satendra Singh Lohiya scripts Cook Strait history -PTI

Padma Shri and Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awardee, Madhya Pradesh's international para swimmer Shri @SatendraSLohiya, has created history by successfully crossing New Zealand's Cook Strait, one of the toughest sea channels in the world,said Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. With this remarkable achievement, he becomes the first para swimmer from Asia to conquer the Cook Strait.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to him on this extraordinary feat. This proud moment for the nation and for Madhya Pradesh. —*PTI*

ASIAN C'SHIP

Amanpreet shines as India complete clean sweep in 25m centre fire

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

India's pistol stalwart Amanpreet Singh clinched the biggest medal of his career, striking gold in the 25m centre fire event as the country completed a clean sweep of the podium on the concluding day of the Asian Championship here on Friday.

The 38-year-old Amanpreet fired a stellar 589 to claim gold, edging out fellow countryman and Olympian Gurpreet Singh, who scored 584 for silver, while Ankur Goel secured bronze with 570, completing India's sweep of the 25m centre fire podium. The Indian trio dominated the team event as well, amassing a commanding 1743 points to clinch team gold, while Vietnam secured silver with a total of 1671 points. India signed off in style, collecting seven medals on the final day to cap a dominant campaign.

The team finished with an impressive overall tally of 33 medals in the senior rifle and pistol events 13 gold, 11 silver and nine bronze. Ace Indian shooter Sift Kaur Samra too delivered a stirring performance in the women's 50m rifle prone event, fighting till the very last shot to clinch a well-earned silver medal. —*PTI*

Riyan named RR captain

NEW DELHI 13 FEB

Talented Assam all-rounder Riyan Parag was on Friday named Rajasthan Royals skipper for the upcoming IPL season, marking a leadership reset after Sanju switch to Chennai Super Kings. A product of the Royals system and one of the franchise's longest-serving Indian players, the 24-year-old Riyan has been with the Rajasthan Royals since IPL 2019. He thus becomes one of the youngest skippers in the league's recent history. —*PTI*

Finland beats Sweden 4-1

MILAN, 13 FEB

Joel Armia scored a short-handed goal as Finland revived its Olympic campaign by beating archrival Sweden 4-1 on Friday in a group-stage victory 20 years after the sides squared off in the gold-medal game at the Turin Games.

Finland's win after losing its opener at the Milan Cortina Games to Slovakia leaves the group's quarterfinal spot up for grabs Saturday.

The feisty affair featured pushing and shoving at the end of the second period, even if the stakes were lower than the 2006 Turin Games final. Sweden won that one, in a game that still resonates today for both sides.

The third period opened with three players in the penalty box for each team. —*PT*

-PTI

Lubomir stuns Manav Thakkar in second round

CHENNAI, 13 FEB

Manav Thakkar, India's biggest hope, crashed out in the second round of the men's singles at the WTT Star Contender table tennis tournament at the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University on Friday. He received a bye in the opening round. World No. 174 Lubomir Jancarik of Czechia stunned the 33rd-ranked Indian, seeded four, in four games (11-6, 11-7, 9-11, 11-9), producing one of the biggest upsets of the event so far. The 38-year-old was sharp and consistent from the outset. His serves were precise, especially the backhand side spins. His returns were deep and controlled, and he handled both short exchanges and long rallies with assurance. Jancarik seldom gave away easy points and kept the pressure on throughout.—*PTI*

A tribute helmet, as CAS weighs Heraskevych's appeal

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, 13 FEB

The Court of Arbitration for Sport was hearing the appeal surrounding the disqualification of Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych from the Milan Cortina Games on Friday, though it still isn't clear how he could compete in these Olympics even if he wins his case.

Meanwhile, his disqualification was justified because he insisted on bringing his messaging — a tribute helmet — onto the field of play, International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry reiterated Friday.

Heraskevych was in Milan for the hearing on Friday, still believing that his plan to wear a helmet displaying the images of more than 20 Ukrainian athletes and coaches who have been killed since Russia invaded their country in 2022 was not in violation of the Olympic Charter.

"I feel the same as the last four days," Heraskevych said. "I believe I didn't fail at any rules, so therefore I shouldn't be suspended, and I should be today part of the Olympic Games, part of the competition, but not part of the hearing. So, we continue to fight for our truth." —*PTI*

Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych -PTI

-PTI

170 GOLFERS, 60 CONTRACTS

PGTI's 72-The League auction set for Monday

NEW DELHI, 13 FEB

As many as 170 professional golfers from 11 countries will go under the hammer here on Monday for the inaugural '72 The League', a flagship league of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), announced on Friday.

A total of 60 spots will be up for grabs for golfers in the league as each of the six franchises will pick 10 for their respective teams, for a total auction purse of Rs six crore.

The League, which was launched by PGTI in partnership with Game of Life Sports (GOLS), will begin on 21 February with the finals scheduled on 6 March.

For the auction, the 170 golfers who have put up their names will be graded into three categories -- Platinum, Gold, and Silver.

The top 30 among them, according to the PGTI's 2025 Order of Merit, will be in the Platinum category, while Gold will comprise players from the 31st to 60th position, and the rest of the golfers will be in the Silver category.

The inaugural season will take place across three of the Delhi NCR's most prestigious golf venues -- Classic Golf & Country Club, Jaypee Greens, and Qutab Golf Course.

The league will feature a fast-paced match-play format, designed specifically for television and digital platforms. —*PTI*

Atletico Madrid collapses Barcelona 4-0

MADRID, 13 FEB

Atletico Madrid hammered Copa del Rey holders Barcelona 4-0 on Thursday night in the first leg of their semi-final clash. After an Eric Garcia own goal sent Diego Simeone's side ahead early on, Antoine Griezmann, Ademola Lookman, and Julian Alvarez struck to give Atletico a landslide lead by half-time. Barca defender Garcia was sent off in the final stages, with Atletico maintaining their significant advantage on the record 32-time winners, which they will take into the second leg at Camp Nou on March 3.

Antoine Griezmann -X/@MADRID

Both sides missed good chances in the second half, with Barca's Pau Cubarsi having a goal disallowed before Garcia was sent off in the final stages. Atletico preserved their significant advantage over the record 32-time winners, which they will take into the second leg at Camp Nou on 3 March.

Well off the pace in La Liga and not showing the quality of a side likely to go deep in the Champions League, the Copa del Rey represents Atletico's best chance of silverware this season. —*PTI*